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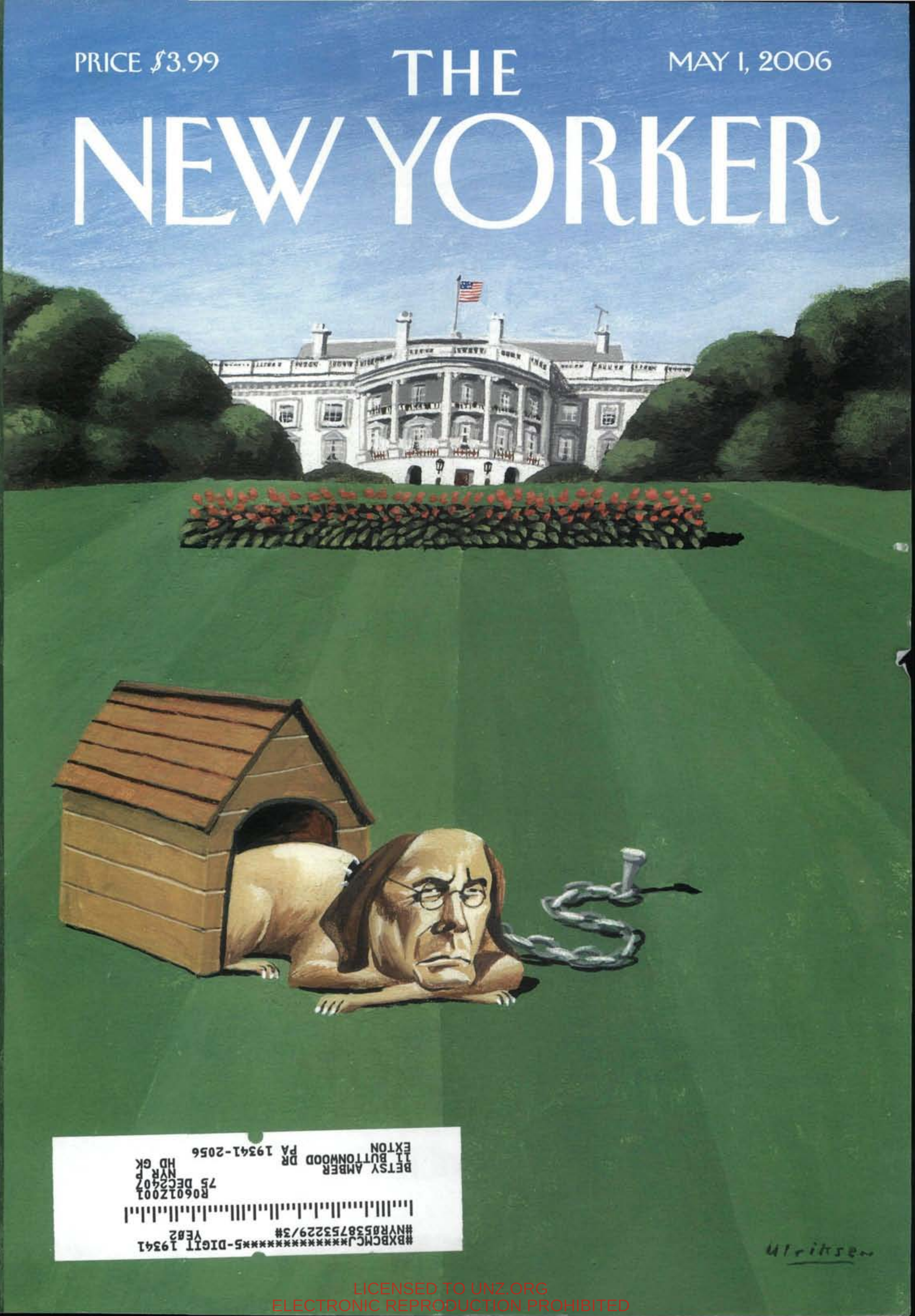

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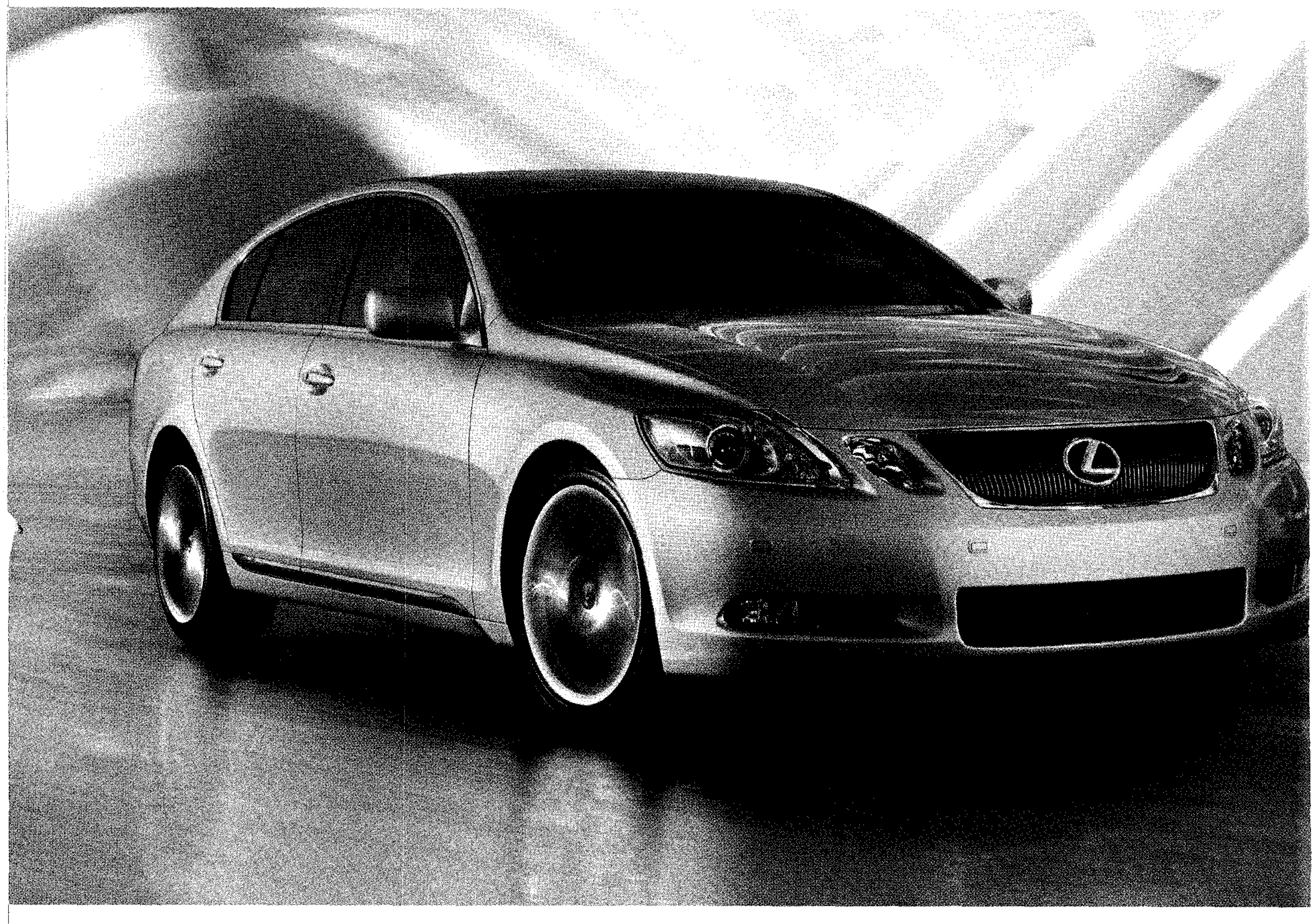

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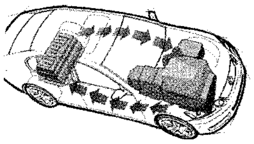

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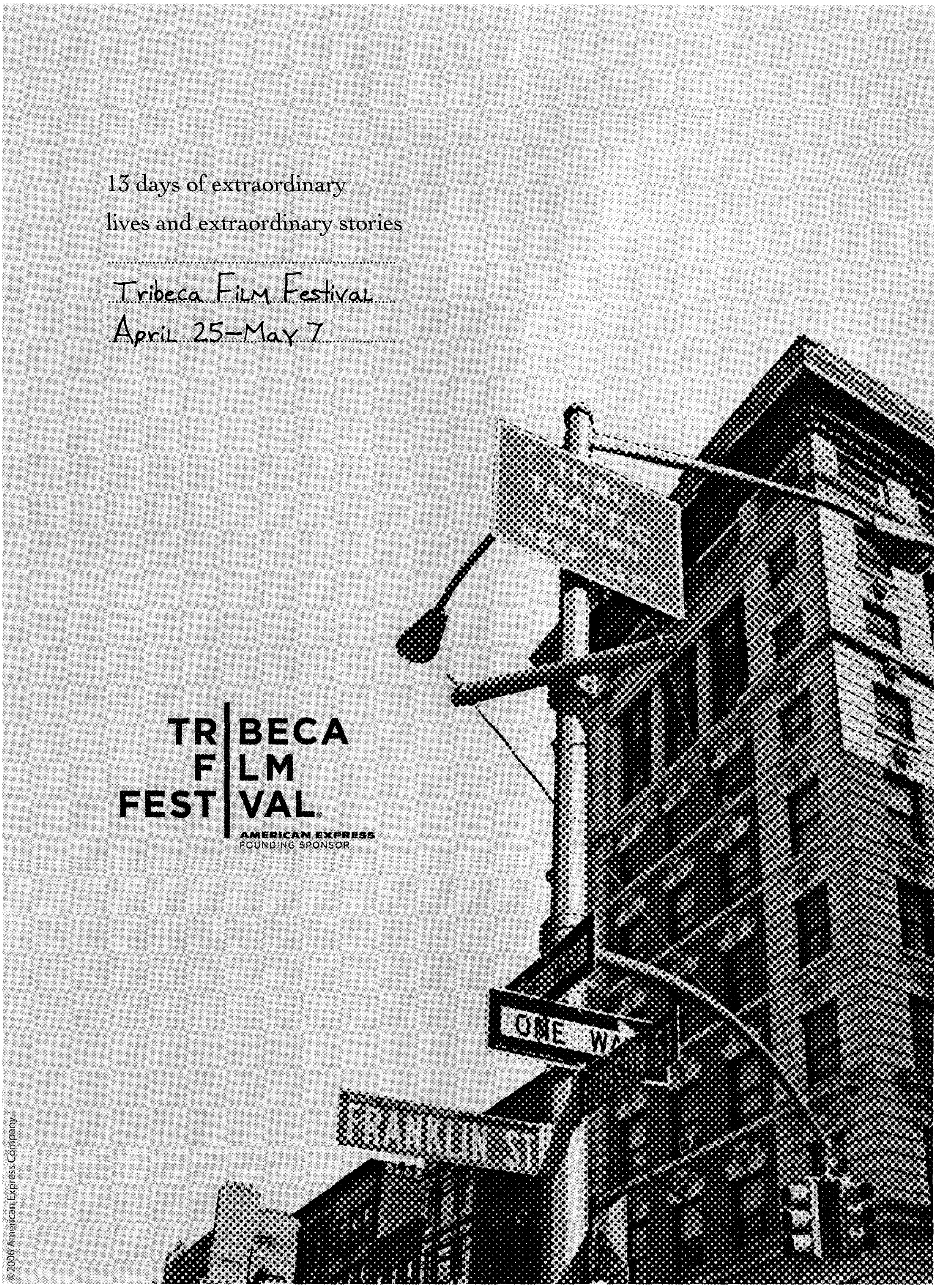

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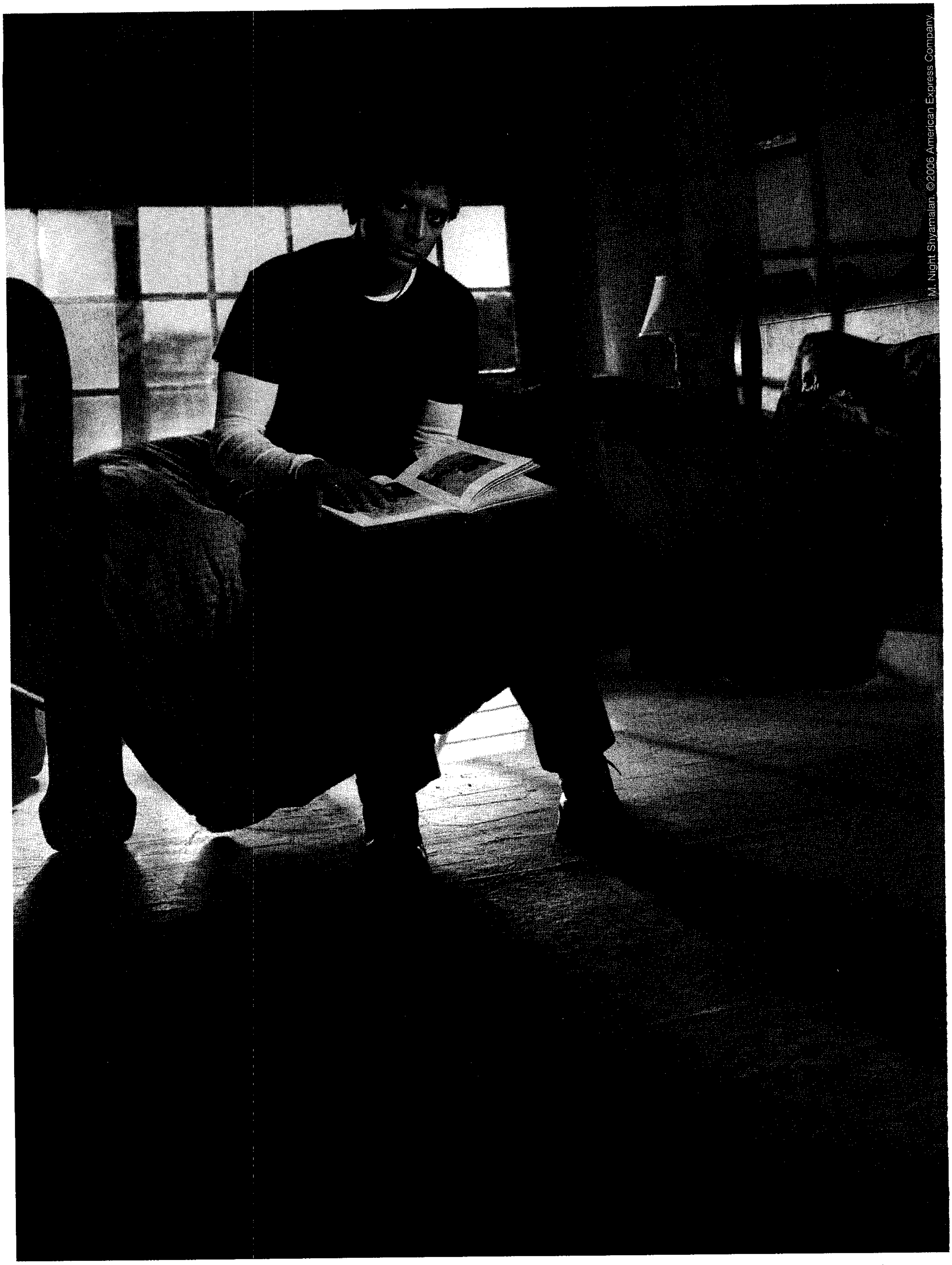

M. Night Shyamalan. ©2006 American Express Company.

My name M. Night Shyamalan

childhood ambition Rubik's Cube champion

fondest memory Kissing my wife in the rain

soundtrack My daughter playing Chopin

retreat Our farm

wildest dream Living in the south of France and writing a novel

proudest moment When I see my children overcome fear

biggest challenge Not letting work make me unhappy

alarm clock Pre occupation

perfect day Walking with my family in the woods

first job Promotional video for a law firm

indulgence Basketball

last purchase Moby Dick

favorite movie The Godfather

inspiration The three black-haired angels that live in my house

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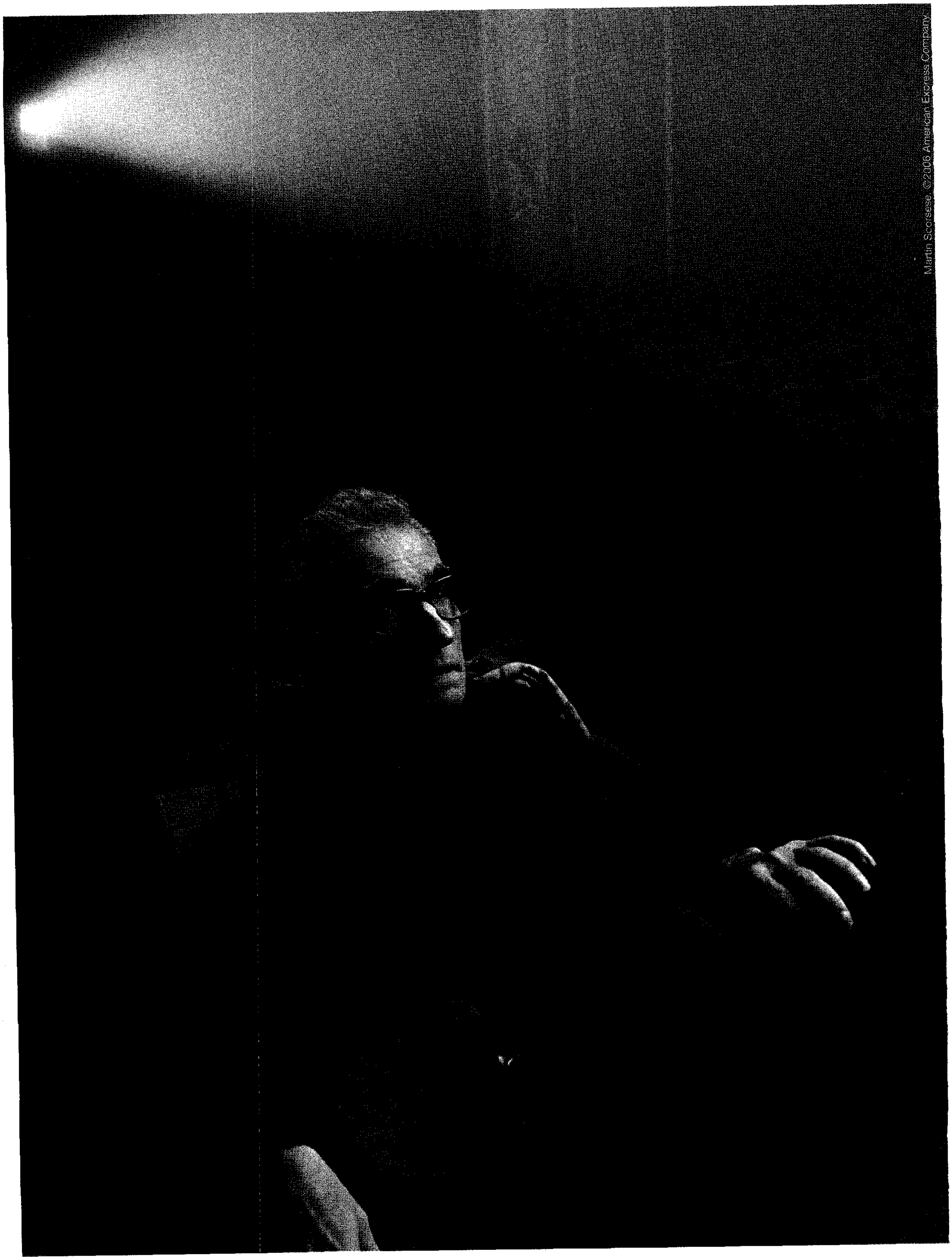
Martin Scorsese. ©2006 American Express Company

My name MARTIN SCORSESE

childhood ambition To get OUT of where I WAS

fondest memory My PARENTS at The premiere of "MEAN STREETS" 1973

soundtrack A mix of All types of music I've KNOWN over The years

retreat A Room at The Top of my House WITH my books

wildest dream To WRITE MUSIC

proudest moment MAKING my youngest DAughTER laugh

biggest challenge My children

alarm clock My 6-year-old daughter and Her dog, Desmond

perfect day WITH my FAMILY. And maybe, later, a movie

first job loading CARDBOARD boxes on AN Assembly line AT A VITAMIN FACTORY — summer 1962

indulgence Clothes

last purchase 12 pair of Socks From Rome, Italy

favorite movie They Are Legion

inspiration Other Filmmakers

My life Still working on it

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My name ....

childhood ambition ....

fondest memory ....

soundtrack ....

retreat ....

wildest dream ....

proudest moment ....

biggest challenge ....

alarm clock ....

perfect day ....

first job ....

indulgence ....

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CONTRIBUTORS

Bill Buford ("Carnal Knowledge," p. 41) is the author of "Heat," which will be published next month.

Hendrik Hertzberg (Comment, p. 33) is a senior editor who writes frequently about politics and policy. His book "Politics: Observations & Arguments" is available in paperback.

Daniel Raeburn ("Vessels," p. 48) is writing a book about literary comic books entitled "The Imp of the Perverse," to be published next year. He lives in Chicago.

Ben McGrath ("Kiss City," p. 54) is a staff writer.

Mark Ulriksen (Cover) has a second illustrated children's book, "The Biggest Parade," with words by Elizabeth Winthrop, coming out in August.

Frances Brent (Poem, p. 47) won the 2005 May Swenson Poetry Award for her book "The Beautiful Lesson of the I."

Ian Parker ("Birth of a Nation?," p. 66) has been writing for the magazine since 1994.

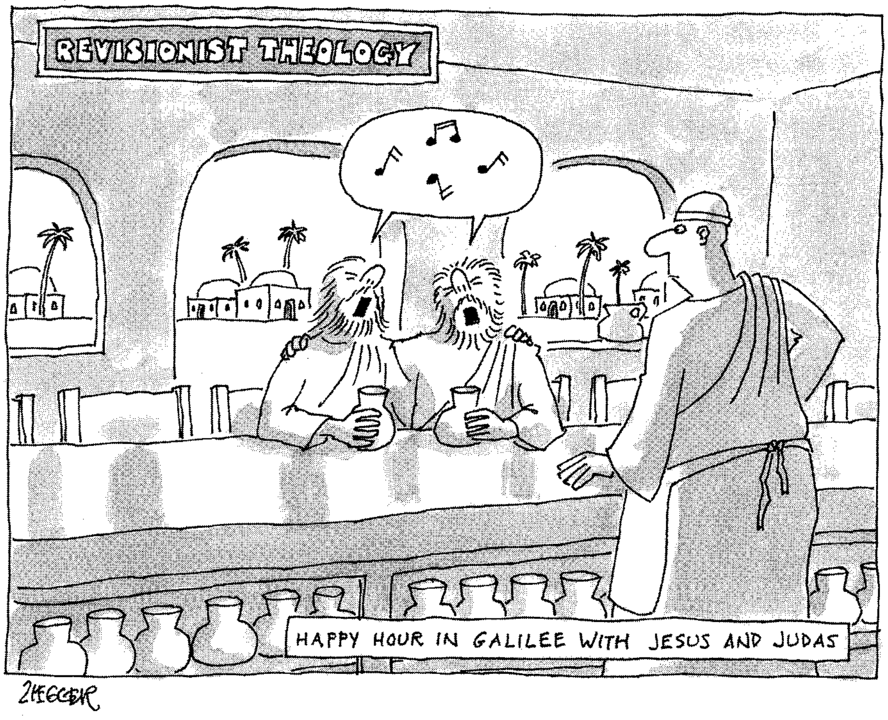
Adam Zagajewski (Poem, p. 72) is a poet, novelist, and essayist. His most recent collection of poems, "Without End," is available in paperback.

William Trevor (Fiction, p. 76) has published fifteen novels and eleven collections of short stories, including "A Bit on the Side."

Claudia Roth Pierpont (Books, p. 82) is the author of "Passionate Minds," a collection of essays about women writers.

Nancy Franklin (On Television, p. 90) writes a regular column on television.

David Denby (The Current Cinema, p. 95) is a film critic for the magazine. His books include "Great Books" and "American Sucker." ♦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FAMILY EMERGENCIES

Jerome Groopman gives a fairly accurate account of the current practices in American hospitals regarding "family presence"—permitting patients' relatives to witness resuscitation and invasive procedures in the emergency room ("Being There," April 3rd). However, it should be noted that studies show that health-care providers with prior experience performing resuscitation and invasive procedures in the presence of family members are more likely to endorse the practice. Other research indicates that educating providers on family presence may likewise positively influence attitudes toward the practice. Since "keeping families out of the emergency room . . . may be impossible," these findings should figure prominently in any discussion of whether a hospital should or should not permit the practice of family presence.

Arlene P. Burd
Chicago, Ill.

On January 22nd of this year, my sister Hannah was crossing a street in Manhattan when she was struck by a car. I was at the scene of the accident, but I was not allowed to ride with her in the ambulance (she was unconscious) or, later, to be present with her in the emergency room. I had no reason to believe when we arrived at the hospital that she would not survive, but sometime later she was declared dead. Had I been present for the ride or some of the resuscitation efforts, perhaps her death might not have been so shocking. Most important, I would have spent those precious last few minutes with Hannah and offered her the support that only a family member or close friend can give.

Rebecca Jupiter
New York City

INCOME INEQUALITY

John Cassidy bolsters the hypothesis that people's health is harmed by relative (rather than absolute) deprivation by citing evidence from the animal kingdom ("Relatively Deprived," April 3rd). For example, he writes that "dominant rhesus monkeys have lower rates of atherosclerosis (hardening of the arteries) than monkeys further down the social hierarchy." But such findings do not support policies to redistribute income—after all, animals with social hierarchies have no monetary income. Status among humans is determined not only by wealth but also by traits such as political power, athletic prowess, military heroics, intellectual success, and good looks, and equalizing incomes will only intensify the importance of these non-pecuniary traits as sources of status. There's no reason to believe that people with low status in these non-monetary categories will not suffer all the stress and envy now allegedly suffered by people with low incomes.

Donald J. Boudreaux
Chairman, Department of Economics
George Mason University
Fairfax, Va.

I read Cassidy's article on the effects of relative deprivation with interest, but I have, for lack of a better word, a metaphysical disagreement. We are all dissatisfied, in one way or another. Dissatisfaction is a part of the human condition. Any family can look across the street or down the block or across town and find someone better off than they are, whether materially, emotionally, or in terms of health or appearance. This is a more appropriate subject for religions than governments. To advocate public-policy changes based on this kind of thinking is to run the risk of creating solutions that are worse than the problems they attempt to cure.

John R. Inzero
Cranbury, N.J.

•

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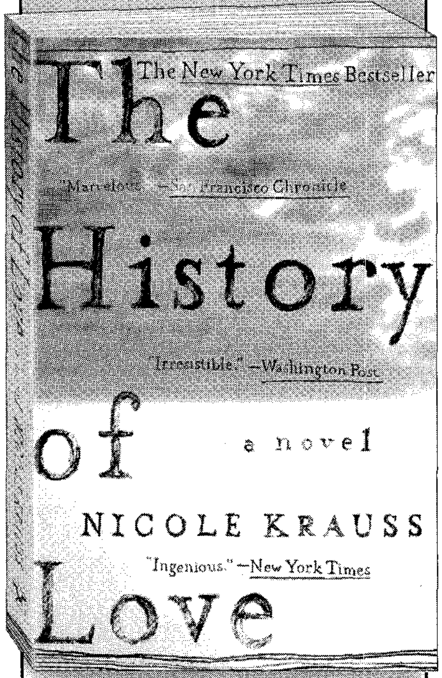
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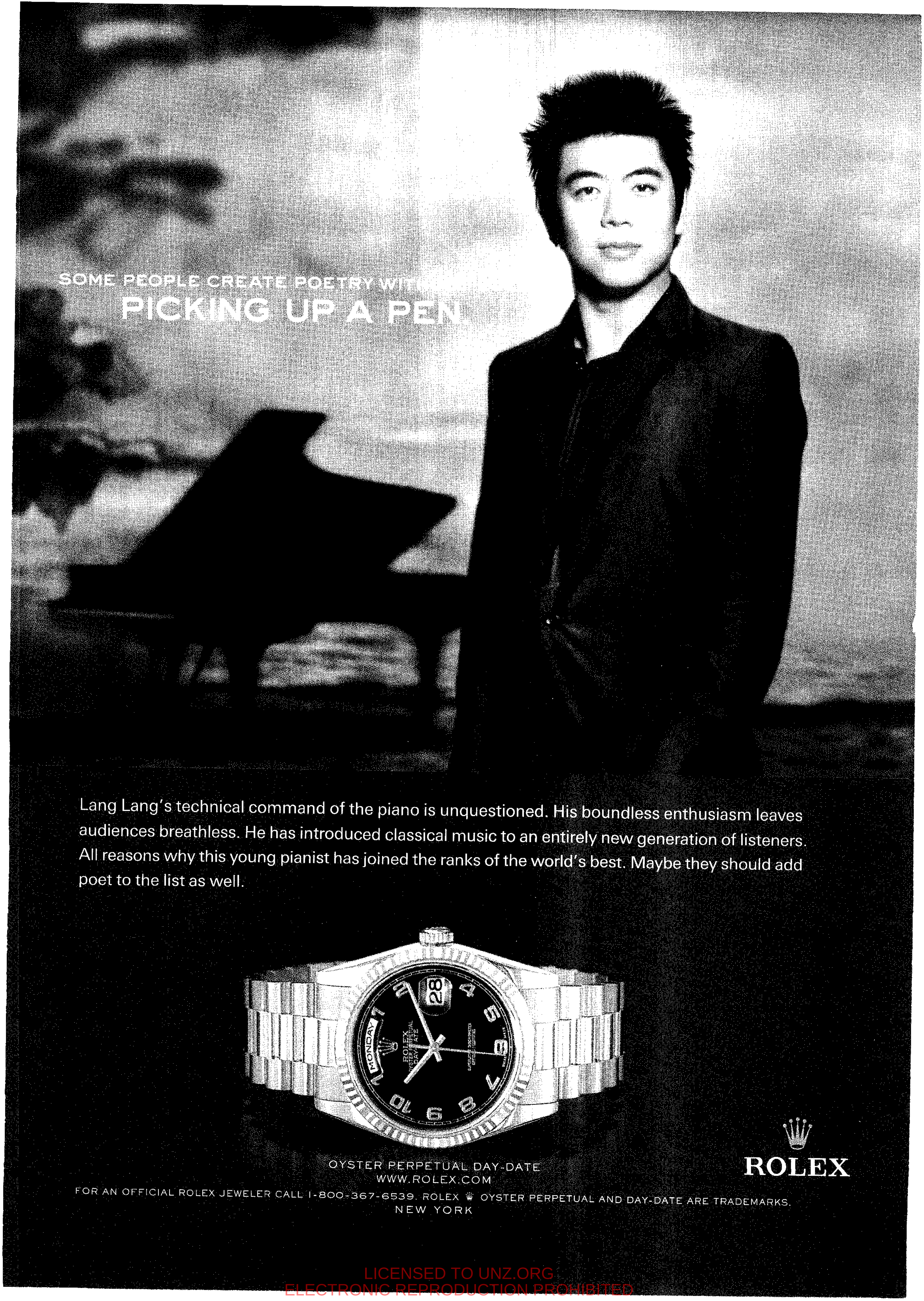
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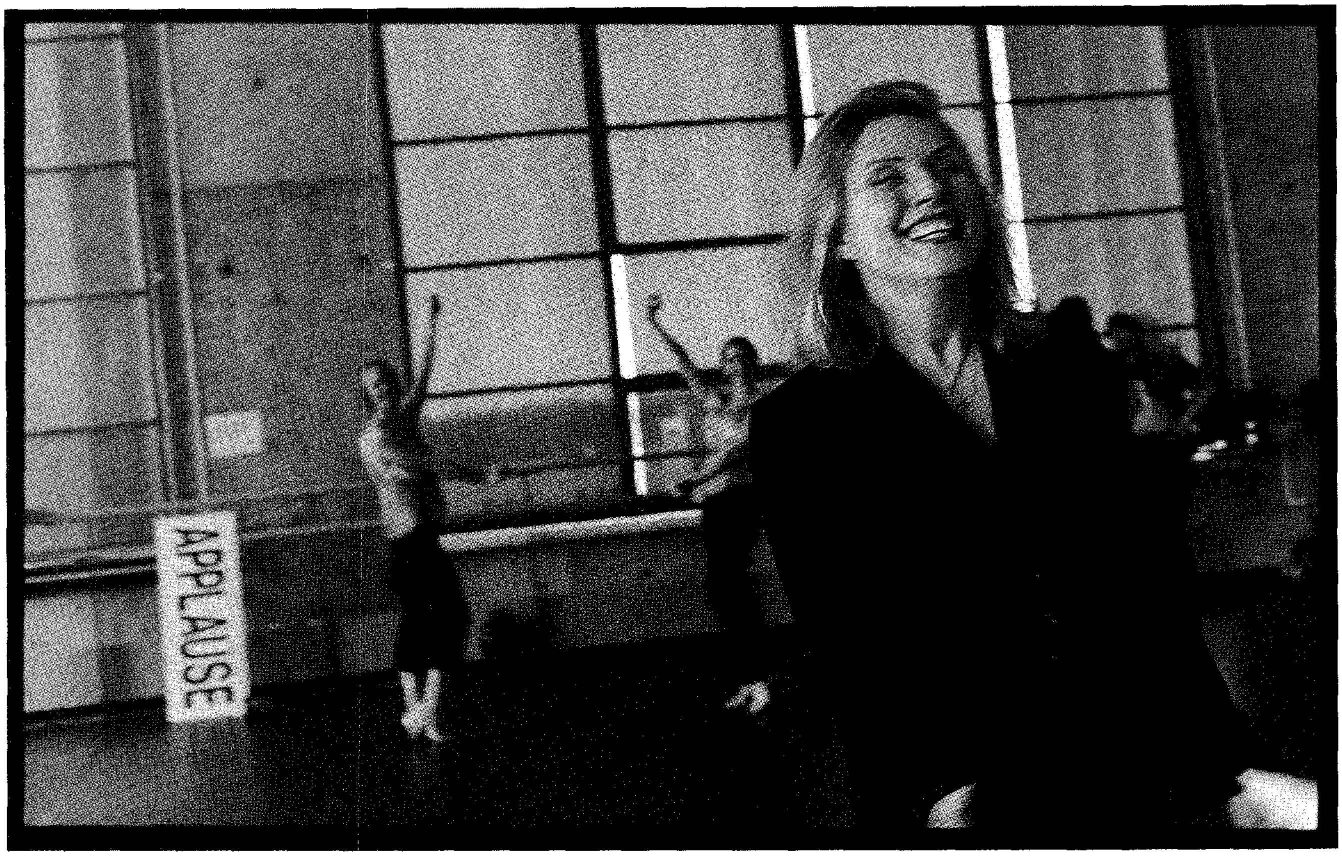

Blondie's Deborah Harry, now in a Richard Move dance production at the Kitchen. Photograph by Sylvia Plachy.

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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THIS WEEK

THE THEATRE
WILD THINGS

"Brundibar," a children's opera written by the Czech composer Hans Krása in 1938 and performed by the children in the concentration camp to which he was deported in 1942, has inspired a new production designed by the children's-book illustrator Maurice Sendak and adapted by Tony Kushner, at the New Victory. "But a Giraffe," a new musical curtain-raiser also written by Kushner, precedes the show. (See page 14.)

NIGHT LIFE
UKULELE TIME

The NY Uke Fest fills the Theatre for the New City's multiple stages with folks devoted to the four-string Hawaiian instrument. The acts include Greg Hawkes, the keyboardist for the Cars (who always carries a ukulele with him), and Folk Uke, a duo consisting of the daughters of Willie Nelson and Arlo Guthrie. (See page 18.)

ART
ABSTRACT THOUGHT

The Studio Museum in Harlem's "Energy/Experimentation: Black Artists and Abstraction 1964-1980" presents a seldom considered cross-section of twentieth-century art and, in doing so, enlivens what can sometimes be a dusty topic in museum settings. Through July 2. (See page 19.)

MOVIES
ALTMAN'S AMERICA

The eighty-one-year-old Robert Altman has spent decades debunking America's inflated legends and focussing on its people and their endearing quirks. Moving Image opens its six-week retrospective of his film career with a screening of "Kansas City," from 1996, which will be followed by a discussion with the director himself. (See page 29.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND
BIDDING ON BLAKE

Nineteen of William Blake's watercolor drawings, originally made for the 1808 edition of Robert Blair's poem "The Grave" and executed in Blake's fantastical, early-Romantic style, go on sale at Sotheby's, along with the engraved portfolio (c. 1821). (See page 30.)

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THE THEATRE
OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

ALL DOLLED UP
Colin Quinn and Working Stiff Productions present a new comedy by Bobby Spillane, based on the true story of a cross-dressing gangster. Susan Campanaro directs. Previews begin April 29. (Acorn, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

BRUNDIBAR
Maurice Sendak designed the set and Tony Kushner wrote the libretto for this children's opera, in which a brother and sister, along with a clutch of talking animals, defeat an evil organ grinder. "But a Giraffe," a curtain-raiser by Kushner, precedes the show. Previews begin April 28. (New Victory, 209 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.)

THE CAINE MUTINY COURT-MARTIAL
David Schwimmer stars in a revival of Herman Wouk's 1954 play, based on his Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, about a naval lieutenant on trial for mutiny during the Second World War. Jerry Zaks directs. In previews. (Schoenfeld, 236 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

CORTEO
Cirque du Soleil comes to town with a show about a clown who imagines his funeral as a carnival. In previews. (Randall's Island Park. *800-678-5440.)*

CUL-DE-SAC
Transport Group presents the world première of a new play by John Cariani, which explores three households in one neighborhood. In previews. Opens April 30. (Connelly, 220 E. 4th St. 212-352-3101.)

THE DROWSY CHAPERONE
A new meta-musical, about a theatre fan in a reverie over his favorite musical, starring Bob Martin and Sutton Foster. Directed and choreographed by Casey Nicholaw. In previews. Opens May 1. (Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 212-307-4100.)

FAITH HEALER
Ralph Fiennes, Cherry Jones, and Ian McDiarmid star in a revival of Brian Friel's 1979 play, about a man with a gift for healing, his long-suffering wife, and his loyal manager. In previews. (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

FAUST
David Herskovits directs Target Margin Theatre's production of parts one and two of Goethe's masterpiece. In previews. Opens April 30. (Classic Stage Company, 136 E. 13th St. 212-279-4200.)

A FINE & PRIVATE PLACE
York Theatre Company presents a musical fantasy about finding love in a cemetery. Gabriel Barre directs. In previews. Opens April 27. (York Theatre at St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. 212-868-4444.)

HOT FEET
Maurice Hines conceived, directed, and choreographed this dance musical set to the groovy tunes of Earth, Wind & Fire, co-created with Maurice White. In previews. Opens April 30. (Hilton, 213 W. 42nd St. 212-307-4100.)

J.A.P. CHRONICLES, THE MUSICAL
Isabel Rose wrote, composed, and stars in this musical, about six former bunkmates at a camp reunion. In previews. (Perry Street Theatre, 31 Perry St. 212-868-4444.)

THE LIEUTENANT OF INISHMORE
Martin McDonagh's gory black comedy, about a terrorist from Galway whose beloved cat is found dead, moves to Broadway. In previews. (Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

MARY STUART
The Pearl presents the play by Friedrich Schiller, about the execution of Mary, Queen of Scots, upon decree by her cousin Queen Elizabeth. Directed by Eleanor Holdridge. In previews. Opens April 30. (80 St. Marks Pl. 212-598-9802.)

NO CHILD
Nilaja Sun wrote and performs her examination of the New York City public-school system. Hal Brooks directs. Previews begin April 29. (Beckett, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

Baltimore's Spank Rock plays the Mercury Lounge on April 29.

LISELOTTE WATKINS

SORE THROATS
Theatre for a New Audience presents the New York première of a play by Howard Brenton, about a woman whose twenty-year marriage collapses. In previews. Opens April 30. (The Duke on 42nd Street, 229 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.)

TARZAN
Disney's version of Edgar Rice Burroughs's classic story comes to Broadway. With a book by David Henry Hwang and music by Phil Collins. Bob Crowley directs. In previews. (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 212-307-4747.)

TEMPEST TOSS'D
A new family musical of Shakespeare's "The Tempest," adapted and directed by Sarah Rosenberg. Previews begin April 27. (Manhattan Ensemble Theatre, 55 Mercer St. 212-239-6200.)

THE WEDDING SINGER
A musical based on the 1998 movie, about a wedding singer who falls in love with a bride-to-be in New Jersey in the eighties. John Rando directs. In previews. Opens April 27. (Al Hirschfeld, 302 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

NOW PLAYING

AWAKE AND SING!
Lincoln Center Theatre's revival of Clifford Odets's drama (back at the Belasco, where it débuted in 1935) is a triumph. The director, Bartlett Sher, has brought together a virtuoso cast—including Zoë Wanamaker, Ben Gazzara, Mark Ruffalo, and Jonathan Hadary—who make Odets's dialogue crackle with all its well-wrought longing and verve. Sher has also collaborated well with the designer Michael Yeargan to break the scenic mold of naturalism, which Odets's lyricism was always struggling to transcend. Among the many revelations of Sher's subtle excavation is the powerfully evoked relationship between the gangster Moe Axelrod (Ruffalo) and the married Hennie (the outstanding Lauren Ambrose), who brazenly leaves her loveless marriage and her child for him. Odets didn't live to see the lustre restored to his name, but, thanks to Lincoln Center Theatre's allegiance to his genius, we did. (111 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

BASED ON A TOTALLY TRUE STORY
Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa's play comes off like above-average television. It even has commercials: as the twenty-something comic-book scribe Ethan (Carson Elrod) paces the stage, freaking out over his problems (parents splitting, boyfriend trouble, career angst), brand names like Sears and HBO appear on monitors behind him. The tired joke is that the semiautobiographical Ethan, also a playwright, is too good for Hollywood, although, after listening to his Hollywood-cliché reactions to his screenplay deal and his breakup, one wonders. The director, Michael Bush, wisely hurries things along, but even the Flash couldn't save these energetic actors from the excesses of the cloyingly self-referential script. (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212.)

FESTEN
A wealthy Danish family gathers to celebrate its patriarch's sixtieth birthday, when one of the sons (Michael Hayden) makes a shocking accusation against the guest of honor. But no degree of shock, or pain or outrage, actually registers in this curious world. The director, Rufus Norris, forgoes naturalism for mood, which here isn't eerie or even alienating, just enigmatically vacant, and while the cast (which includes Julianna Margulies, Jeremy Sisto, and Ali MacGraw) achieves the basic feat of aesthetic consistency, it's to no particular end. The play, adapted by David Eldridge from the 1998 Dogme film "The Celebration," was a hit in London, but in its transatlantic crossing it appears to have lost, or rather become, steam. (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE HISTORY BOYS
Nicholas Hytner directs Alan Bennett's play. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST
Lynn Redgrave stars as Lady Bracknell in Oscar Wilde's play, in a Theatre Royal Bath/Peter Hall Company production. Sir Peter Hall directs. (BAM's Harvey Theatre, 651 Fulton St. 718-636-4100.)

A JEW GROWS IN BROOKLYN
In the course of this musical memoir, Jake Ehrenreich croons, reminisces, kibbitzes, and breathlessly revisits the golden age of borscht-belt entertainment. A nice Jewish boy who grows up to play Ringo in the international touring company of "Beatlemania" (after his parents escaped the Nazis by spending the war years in Siberian labor camps) ought to have something to

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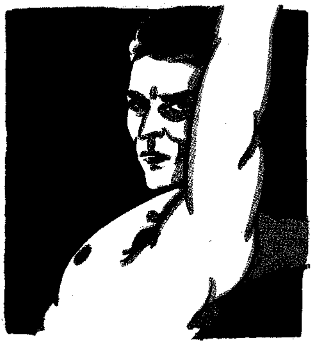
CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
UP FROM MIAMI

Edward Villella, who danced with New York City Ballet in the sixties and seventies, was arguably the first home-grown male star of American classical dance, and he looked like a local product. He was a street kid from Queens—tough, virile, cocky. As he relates in his 1992 memoir, "Prodigal Son," that personality brought him into conflict with George Balanchine, N.Y.C.B.'s director. Balanchine, he says, resented him. He, in turn, absented himself from the Master's daily class—a grave slight. Curiously, however, Balanchine went on making great roles for Villella, and Villella, in his book, shows a greater and more loving understanding of Balanchine's technique than any other N.Y.C.B. memoirist. He has shown the same thing in his directorship of Miami City Ballet, which he founded in 1986. His dancers look like Balanchine dancers: energized, musical, bursting, fresh. From April 28 through May 2, the company will dance works by Jerome Robbins, Twyla Tharp, Paul Taylor, and, of course, Balanchine in Greenvale and Purchase, New York, and in Princeton.

—*Joan Acocella*



say about the American dream—and Ehrenreich does, though we've heard much of it before. Nonetheless, this Yiddish-inflected singing valentine to an outer-borough coming-of-age makes its case with equal parts sincerity, shtick, and snake oil. (American Theatre of Actors, 314 W. 54th St. 212-352-3101.)

LANDSCAPE OF THE BODY
In the Signature Theatre Company's uneven yet fascinating revival of John Guare's astonishing play from 1977, Rosalie (Sherie Rene Scott) is an artist killed by a collision with a cyclist; her sister, Betty (Lili Taylor), feels compelled to take over and live her sister's life. Using nearly every form available to him—vaudeville sketches, standup comedy, cabaret, straight drama, melodrama, and cheesy movie conventions—Guare mines the idea of the double. In Taylor and Scott, the play's prolific director, Michael Greif, has chosen two larger-than-life, exceptionally intelligent actresses. Both Taylor and Scott succeed, spectacularly, in making us see what Guare sees in these women: the brutal truth behind the gossamer, the underpinnings of the actor's soul. (Reviewed in our issue of 4/24/06.) (Peter Norton Space, 555 W. 42nd St. 212-352-3101.)

LESTAT
The new musical based on Anne Rice's "Vampire Chronicles" features music by Elton John and lyrics by Bernie Taupin. (Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 212-307-4100.)

THE MISTAKES MADELINE MADE
Naked Angels presents a new comedy by Elizabeth Meriwether ("Heddatron"), directed by Evan Cabnet, about a young personal assistant with a fear of bathing and a penchant for bad poets. (45 Below, at 45 Bleecker St. 212-868-4444.)

STUFF HAPPENS
David Hare, in his history play about the George W. Bush and Tony Blair administrations' actions leading up to the war in Iraq, rehashes public gaffes and imagines closed-door power meetings, depicting a group of carelessly hawkish Cabinet members on an inexorable path to war, with a focus on Colin Powell (Peter Francis James), as the lone diplomat, and Condoleezza Rice (the convincing Gloria Reuben), as a chameleonic conniver shadowing the President. With fast-paced staging and intelligent direction by Daniel Sullivan and a game ensemble cast—including David Pittu as an excitable Paul Wolfowitz and Zach Grenier doing a sufficiently smarmy Dick Cheney—the play's effect is not so much illuminating as harrowing. (425 Lafayette St. 212-239-6200.)

THREE DAYS OF RAIN
Richard Greenberg's play flashes back between a dysfunctional family's generations to explore the mysterious origins of its neurotic inheritance. A good idea in principle, Greenberg's story is strangely inert in the telling. The presence of Julia Roberts, however, turns this lacklustre party into the hottest ticket in town. She works hard and does well enough. In case you're wondering, Roberts's million-dollar smile radiates its candlepower across the footlights; you do long, however, for a closeup of those warm eyes. Paul Rudd and Bradley Cooper are on hand for mouth-to-mouth when the play, as it frequently does, loses its pulse. The ever-present, ever-successful Joe Mantello directs. (Bernard B. Jacobs, 242 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE THREEPENNY OPERA
The Roundabout Theatre Company presents the operetta by Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 212-719-1300.)

Also Playing

LOS BIG NAMES: 47th Street Theatre, 304 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200. **ENTERTAINING MR. SLOANE:** Laura Pels, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300. **GREY GARDENS:** Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200. **JACQUES BREL IS ALIVE AND WELL AND LIVING IN PARIS:** Zipper, 336 W. 37th St. 212-239-6200. **THE PAJAMA GAME:** American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 212-719-1300. **RED LIGHT WINTER:** Barrow Street Theatre, 27 Barrow St. 212-239-6200. **A SAFE HARBOR FOR ELIZABETH BISHOP:** 59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200. Through April 30. **SHOW PEOPLE:** Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St. 212-246-4422. Through April 30. **SWEENEY TODD:** Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200. **TRYST:** Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 212-239-6200. **WELL:** Longacre, 220 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200.

NIGHT LIFE
ROCK AND POP

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

ASTERISK ART PROJECT
258 Johnson Ave., Brooklyn (No phone)—April 29: **L-D Section II**, the musical arm of the enigmatic multimedia collective Lansing-Dreiden, heads to Bushwick for a preview of its second album of heady art rock, "The Dividing Island." With the **Lilys**.

BARBÈS
376 9th St., Park Slope, Brooklyn (718-965-9177)—April 28: **Zagnut Orkestar.** The Balkans meet Brooklyn in this rowdy six-piece brass band, which is led by the accordionist Matthew Fass. May 1: The clarinet and mandolin virtuoso **Andy Statman** plays bluegrass, jazz, and klezmer music with inspired grace.

BEACON THEATRE
Broadway at 74th St. (212-307-7171)—April 26: The sensitive, radio-friendly pop rock of San Francisco's **Train** makes the Counting Crows sound like Iron Maiden.

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—April 26: **Lila Downs,** whose mother was a Mixtec singer from Mexico and whose father was an academic from the United States, has studied opera and anthropology, and her music addresses feminism, civil rights, and the plight of Mexican immigrants. Her latest album, "La Cantina (Entre Copa y Copa)," is a rootsy affair, full of *ranchera* songs delivered with the help of the accordionist Flaco Jimenez. He won't be appearing with her here, but the opening act, **Charanga Cakewalk,** is led by an accordionist, Michael Ramos.

CANAL ROOM
285 West Broadway (212-941-8100)—April 28: **Colin Hay,** the lead singer of the early-eighties combo Men at Work, has carved out a solo career for himself as a distinctive singer of sometimes undistinctive material.

IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (212-777-6800)—April 27: The stellar Brazilian singer and actor **Seu Jorge.** With **Panjea,** the dance-happy ensemble led by the thumb-piano player and singer Chris Berry. April 28-29: Randy Cordeiro, a Bay Area singer who goes by the name Surreal Neil, leads **Superdiamond,** a long-running, extremely successful outfit that pays tribute to the pop icon Neil Diamond.

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—When **Roy Nathanson** was a child, his father paid him to read books ("five cents a page," according to a recent song), and the former Lounge Lizard and co-founder of the Jazz Passengers developed a lifelong love of literature (he's pursuing an M.F.A. in poetry). For his latest project, "Sotto Voce," Nathanson alternates between his gruff storytelling voice and his mellifluous sound on alto and soprano sax to spin tales that feel both familiar and strange. Italo Calvino's "Invisible Cities" was a key inspiration. On April 26, Nathanson celebrates the release of his album with the help of the beat-boxer Napoleon Maddox (who grew up singing gospel), the bassist Tim Kiah, and fellow Jazz Passengers Curtis Fowlkes, on trombone, and Sam Bardfeld, on violin. April 27: The über-subtle rhythm section of **Damon and Naomi** teams up with the guitarist **Michio Kurihara,** from the Japanese psychedelic ensemble Ghost, for languid and fragile music. April 28: **Tom Russell.** On his record "Hotwalker," which came out last year, the Austin-based songwriter and painter found himself drinking with Charles Bukowski and paying tribute to outsider poets, musicians, and carnival freaks. His new release, "Love and Fear," is full of energetic—and at times refreshingly loud—numbers.

LIVING ROOM
154 Ludlow St. (212-533-7235)—April 27: **Alice Texas** is Alice Schneider, a native New Yorker who rides through the oppressively small towns and dry prairies

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of her imagination searching for love and redemption. Later that night, the stage belongs to the young torch singer **Leona Naess.** May 2: The mandolinist **Chris Thile,** of Nickel Creek, gives a solo show.

MERCURY LOUNGE
217 E. Houston St. (212-260-4700)—April 27: The singer-songwriter and analog devotee **John Vanderslice** stops by with songs from his latest release, "Pixel Revolt." April 29: **Spank Rock.** If this Baltimore-based hip-hop outfit's début album, "YoYoYoYoYo," were a magazine, it would have to be kept hidden under a couch cushion. The breathless dexterity of m.c. Spank (a.k.a. Naeem Juman) and the all-encompassing mind of the producer Armani XXXchange (otherwise known as Alex Epton) give the music a good shot at summer-party ubiquity. The pair throw in everything from driving deep-bass beats to computer samples that will make you scratch your head.

TOWN HALL
123 W. 43rd St. (212-840-2824)—April 29: **Citizen Cope.** Born Clarence Greenwood in Memphis, this singer-songwriter favors complex narratives about everything from race to life on the streets to religion, layered over slow grooves and slightly funky beats. His opening act, **Alice Smith,** is a local singer with a four-octave range. She leans toward ambitious and insightful R. & B. on her forthcoming début album, "For Lovers, Dreamers & Me."

WORLD MUSIC INSTITUTE
April 28: The Gypsy violinist **Roby Lakatos.** (Zankel Hall, Carnegie Hall.) April 30: A night of folk music from Turkey and Greece, with **Derya Türkan** and **Sokratis Sinopoulos,** two talented friends from the neighboring countries. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St.) (For more information about both shows, call 212-545-7536.)

30-65 RK 233-3
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"045 Stokes/19 Kilotons/1957," from 2003, by Michael Light, at Hosfelt.

NY UKE FEST
Fans of the ukulele, your time has come. This gathering features performances by the Moonlighters, Songs from a Random House, the Cars keyboardist, Greg Hawkes, and Folk Uke, the hilarious and foulmouthed duo (their songs include "Knock Me Up" and "Shit Makes the Flowers Grow") of Cathy Guthrie and Amy Nelson, who are the daughters of Arlo and Willie. A pair of musical comedies spotlighting the ukulele will be performed, and there will also be workshops, an open-mike night, and instrument giveaways. (Theatre for the New City, 155 First Ave., at 10th St. 212-868-4444. For more information, visit www.nyukefest.com. April 27-30.)

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—April 25-30: The pianist **Michel Camilo** turns up the heat with his expansive technique, modern-jazz sensibilities, and Latin leanings.

CARLYLE HOTEL
Madison Ave. at 76th St. (212-744-1600)—**Mary Cleere Haran,** a great performer who mixes barbed comic observation with scholarly enthusiasm for the creators of the Great American Songbook, takes over the Café Carlyle through April 29. ♦ Across the hall, in Bemelmans Bar, **Loston Harris** is in attendance.

DIZZY'S CLUB COCA-COLA
Broadway at 60th St. (212-258-9595)—April 25-30: The saxophonist **Joe Lovano** performs duos with the legendary octogenarian pianist **Hank Jones.** The sessions will be recorded for an album, their third together.

FEINSTEIN'S AT THE REGENCY
540 Park Ave., at 61st St. (212-339-4095)—Through April 29: The glamorous vocalist and actress **Diahann Carroll** makes her first New York club appearance in forty years.

IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—April 27-30: The Japanese fusion keyboardist **Keiko Matsui.** Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.** The **Mingus Big Band** takes over on Tuesdays.

JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER
Broadway at 60th St. (212-721-6500)—April 27-29: The Allen Room presents **Tierney Sutton,** an engaging singer who revives familiar standards, and the pianist and vocalist **Loston Harris,** on a breather from his regular gig across town, at Bemelmans Bar.

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—April 25-30: **Jacky Terrasson** generated an enormous buzz when he first hit town, in the early nineties, but, before you knew it, the pianist's moment was over. Nonetheless, he remains a musician who is always worth hearing from. The big news here is that he's joined by the remarkable drummer **Leon Parker,** who's been off the New York scene for some time now.

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—April 25-30: The subtly commanding and influential guitar stylist **Bill Frisell** keeps countless musical ensembles in the air at once. His compact quartet with **Greg Tardy** on saxophone and **Ron Miles** on trumpet is among his most satisfying. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-535-7710)—Recent scholarship has reappraised the history of Tibetan weaponry, identifying sui-generis styles in what was previously assumed to be a design culture derivative of Chinese and Mongolian models. **"Warriors of the Himalayas: Rediscovering the Arms and Armor of Tibet"** draws on examples from the seventh to the mid-twentieth century, intended for both state pageantry and serious war: conical helmets damascened with gold, jewelled swords with protective demons carved into their hilts, elaborate equipage for horses, and distinctive lamellar cloaks, made with overlapping plates of iron sewn together with leather thongs and lined with silk. Through July 2. ♦ **"After the Deluge"** mixes Kara Walker's gruesomely satirical silhouettes, gouaches, and writings with a range of historical works to produce a meditation on death by water and the indelible stain of American racial obsessions. Through July 30. ♦ **"Samuel Palmer: Vision and Landscape."** Through May 29. ♦ **"A Taste for Opulence: Sèvres Porcelain from the Collection."** Through Aug. 13. ♦ **"Hatshepsut: From Queen to Pharaoh."** Through July 9. ♦ **"The Art of Betty Woodman,"** a retrospective of work by the ceramicist, born in 1930, opens on April 25. Through July 30. ♦ The Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Roof Garden reopens on April 25, with four sculptural works by the Chinese artist Cai Guo-Qiang. Through Oct. 29. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9400)—**"Edvard Munch: The Modern Life of the Soul"** is the first American museum retrospective of the Norwegian artist (1863-1944) in thirty years. Through May 8. ♦ In **"Without Boundary: Seventeen Ways of Looking,"** artists from Islamic backgrounds examine their cultures and homelands, mostly from afar. Unexpectedly, perhaps, women reign. Included are works by Mona Hatoum, Shirin Neshat, Ghada Amer, Shahzia Sikander, Shirazeh Houshiary, Emily Jacir, and Marjane Satrapi. Through May 22. ♦

The retrospective **"John Szarkowski: Photographs"** presents work by the critic and curator (he worked at MOMA for almost thirty years), from Midwestern scenes of the nineteen-forties through a 2002 shot taken in upstate New York. Through May 15. ♦ **"On-Site: New Architecture in Spain."** Through May 1. (Open Wednesdays through Mondays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Friday evenings until 8. For the duration of the Munch show, the museum will also stay open until 8 on Saturdays.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—**"David Smith: A Centennial."** Smith (1906-65) parlayed his experiences as a welder, an employee of the Studebaker company, a painter, and an acolyte of the Cubist movement into tremendous steel sculptures that were championed by Clement Greenberg and have become emblems of American modernism. Through May 14. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (800-944-8639)—Philippe Vergne and Chrissie Iles curated **"Day for Night,"** the 2006 Biennial. More than a hundred artists are represented, including Pierre Huyghe, Marilyn Minter, Sturtevant, and Troy Brauntuch. Through May 28. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART
200 Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—**"William Wegman: Funney/Strange."** Through May 28. ♦ **"Symphonic Poem: The Art of Aminah Brenda Lynn Robinson."** Through Aug. 13. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5, and weekends, 11 to 6.)

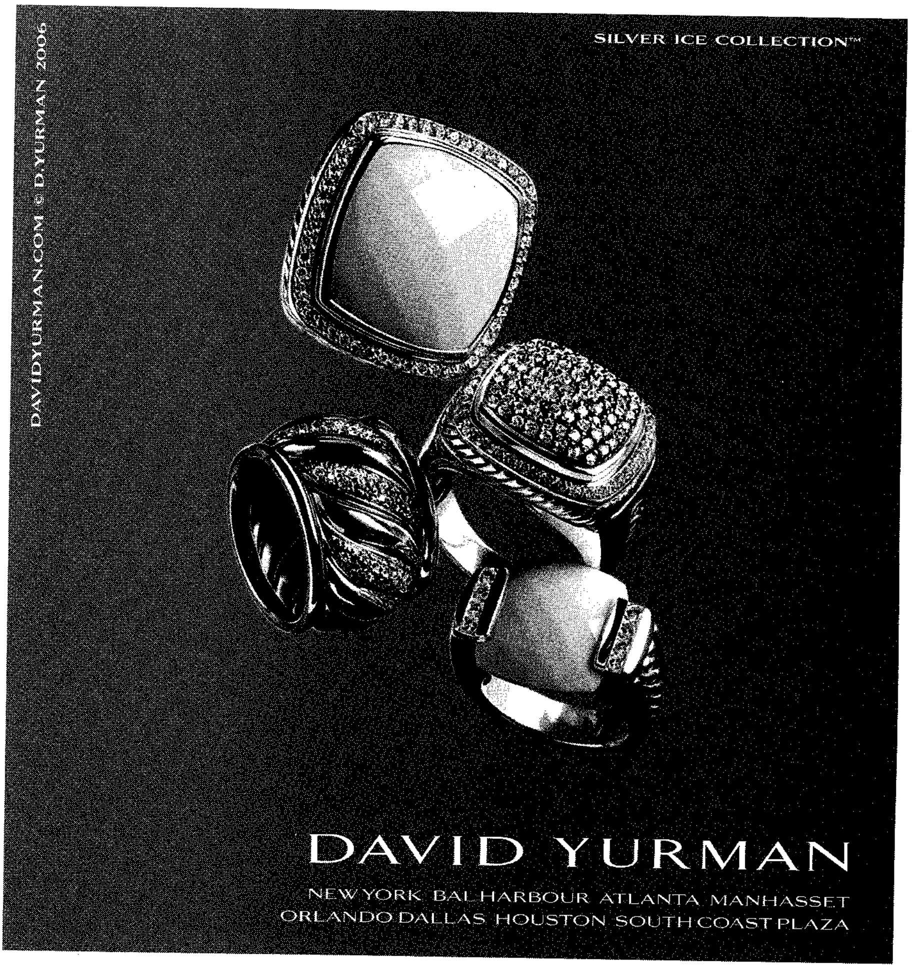
AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
Central Park W. at 79th St. (212-769-5100)—**"Darwin."** Through Aug. 20. ♦ **"The Butterfly Conservatory: Tropical Butterflies Alive in Winter."** Through May 29. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45.)

DAHESH MUSEUM OF ART
580 Madison Ave., at 57th St. (212-759-0606)—The so-called golden age of illustration extended from the eighteen-eighties to the nineteen-thirties, bracketed by the emergence of a popular print culture and of cheaply reproducible photographs. In large-format magazines like *Life* and *The Saturday Evening Post*, lavish but inexpensive children's books, and increasingly image-savvy advertisements, illustrators dramatized key moments and homed in on exciting points of view. **"Stories to Tell: Masterworks from the Kelly Collection of American Illustration"** gathers original paintings and prints, as well as printed matter, featuring the beguiling visions of Maxfield Parrish, N. C. Wyeth, Charles Dana Gibson, Jessie Willcox Smith, and, naturally, Norman Rockwell. Through May 21. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6.)

FRICK COLLECTION
1 E. 70th St. (212-288-0700)—**"Goya's Last Works."** Through May 14. ♦ **"Veronese's Allegories: Virtue, Love, and Exploration in Renaissance Venice."** Through July 16. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, 11 to 5. The Goya exhibition galleries will stay open until 8 on Friday evenings for the duration of the show.)

NEUE GALERIE
1048 Fifth Ave., at 86th St. (212-628-6200)—**"Klee in America."** Through May 22. (Open Thursdays, and Saturdays through Mondays, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 11 to 9.)

STUDIO MUSEUM IN HARLEM
144 W. 125th St. (212-864-4500)—**"Energy/Experimentation: Black Artists and Abstraction 1964-1980"** is a fragmentary sampling rather than a comprehensive survey, but it nonetheless demonstrates how varied sixties and seventies abstraction actually was. It's a fact lost in shows focussed on canonizing movements or particular strains. More than a few works look shockingly contemporary: Sam Gilliam's unstretched canvases smeared with washes of paint, Tom Lloyd's blinking light sculptures, and William T. Williams's vibrant, architecturally precise abstractions. Some of the work by better-known artists—such as Melvin Edwards and Barbara Chase-Riboud—looks more staid. Any absence of politics, although it creeps in via titles and palette choices, is balanced by Howardena Pindell's excoriating performance video, in which she recounts episodes of racism, then dons a blond wig and whiteface to rebut



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them. Through July 2. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, and Sundays, noon to 6; Saturdays, 10 to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Galleries are usually open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6; please call the gallery for exact hours.

TOMOKO SAWADA
Sawada, from Kobe, Japan, is almost thirty, but she has no trouble passing as a schoolgirl. Half of the computer-manipulated color photographs in her new show are formal class portraits of up to forty uniformed girls, each one of whom is a variation on the moon-faced Sawada. The photographer also plays all the matronly schoolteachers and, across the gallery, a host of other young girls in the clownish makeup and artificial tans popular with Japan's style-obsessed teens. Sawada's shifts of identity may not resonate here as acutely as Cindy Sherman's or Nikki S. Lee's, but she tweaks stereotypes with the best of them. Through April 29. (Zabriskie, 41 E. 57th St. 212-752-1223.)

"1968: ALL IN A DREAM"
In a show that attests to the suggestive power of the anonymous snapshot, nearly five hundred of them are hung unframed and side by side for an exhibition that invites us to draw our own conclusions. The pictures were rejected or forgotten at a photo processor outside of Boston, and some of them are over- or double-exposed, but these avant-garde accidents are mere ripples in a sea of fascinating ordinariness: new puppies, dead deer, smiling bride, birthday cake. Since the year is 1968, other ripples—a peace sign, love beads, a Dylan poster, and lots of sailors and soldiers—stud the deceptively bland surface like unexploded bombs. Through April 29. (Roth, 160A E. 70th St. 212-717-9067.)

"RIGHT OF PASSAGE"
Subtitled "Youth Culture from the Mid-Century," this fine show of sixty-seven photographs from the gallery's inventory plays to Greenberg's strengths in postwar American and European material. With work by Larry Clark, Bruce Davidson, Diane Arbus, Robert Frank, and Roy DeCarava, the emphasis is on the moody young outsider, the rebel with and without a cause. (James Dean makes a cameo appearance.) Wholesome teenagers, loving couples, and a slew of Miss America contestants just can't compete with Leon Levinstein's garish Times Square hustler, William Gedney's doe-eyed hippie, and Susan Meiselas's hard-bitten carnival strippers. Through April 29. (Greenberg, 41 E. 57th St. 212-334-0010.)

"WARHOL'S WORLD"
The more than three hundred black-and-white snapshots hung on purple Mao wallpaper here were taken by Andy Warhol at parties, dinners, openings, and more formal portrait sittings between 1976 and 1987, the year he died. Their subjects are celebrities major and minor, not least of whom is Warhol himself, who often seems startled to find himself on the other side of the camera. In the catalogue, Glenn O'Brien calls him "the paparazzo di tutti paparazzi," master of an idiom that prizes artlessness and immediacy, but it may take another fifty years before these pictures look like anything but amusing throwaways. Through April 29. (Zwirner & Wirth, 32 E. 69th St. 212-517-8677.)

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

CARL ANDRE
Shows of the minimalist's minimalist, like this one of Andres old and new, are like a struck tuning fork, reëstablishing the exact pitch of the dominant aesthetic of the past forty years. Two corner rugs of fifty-centimeter-square tiles—seventy-eight in copper from 1975, ninety-one in weathered rolled steel from 1991—charge an otherwise empty room with a presence that is no less sublime for being utterly familiar. New are mathematically determined arrays of eight-inch bluestone tiles, ranked against a wall. As always, Andre abolishes differences between base materiality and strict intellect, attaining a state that must be called spiritual because no lesser term fits. Through April 29. (Cooper, 521 W. 22nd St. 212-255-1105.)

AL HANSEN / JOSÉ LERMA
Hansen (1927-95) studied with John Cage and appeared in his first group show, in 1959, with Rauschenberg, Dine, Oldenburg, and the late Allan Kaprow. A suite of collages crafted from torn Hershey-bar wrappers shows his witty, Fluxus-inspired merging of image and language, arranging fragments of the iconic brown wrapper's text ("hey," "hers," "she," and "yes") to create the outline of a woman dubbed Coco. Other works use matches and cigarette butts to shape towers and buxom women. Next to Hansen, Lerma's large, free-form canvases, which actively quote from a variety of mid-century sources, look like wan attempts to channel a more vital era. Through April 29. (Rosen, 525 W. 24th St. 212-627-6000.)

SHERRIE LEVINE
Levine's hard-core eighties Institutional Critique has evolved into more of a soft-core museology. Vitrines with bronzed objects like a phrenology-study head and human jawbone recall the collections of proto-museums, such as the eighteenth-century *Wunderkammer*. Only here the objects are displayed in duplicate, as if to remind us of the Enlightenment-era emphasis on uniqueness and originality. Levine returns to her oldest reappropriating trick with a suite of photographs "after" Edward Curtis and Man Ray, reproduced in exactitude. Like the rest of the show, there's an august austerity to these works, but the shock and surprise is used up, now that her photos "after" Walker Evans and Edward Weston show up regularly in art-history books. Through April 29. (Cooper, 534 W. 21st St. 212-255-1105.)

DAVID OPDYKE
Some of the plastic army men, bomber planes, and tanks that comprise Opdyke's sculptural tableaux are appropriated from model kits. But most of them—like the tiny stereo speakers and klieg lights scaffolded together into a tabletop White House—are cast by the artist himself. This could all be very didactic: our landscape is made up of ordnance and spectacle, etc. But Opdyke injects mystery into the critique via his fascination with the shapes he fabricates: a swarm of missiles twines around itself like a school of dolphins, and a geek-accurate cross-section model of geological shales includes a layer of buried weaponry. Through April 29. (Roebling Hall, 606 W. 26th St. 212-929-8180.)

AMY SILLMAN
Sillman is a bit of a late bloomer, but this thrilling show of paintings, like much of her recent work, was entirely worth the wait. Unbridled gesture is perfectly balanced with restraint. Figures are largely banished, although a hand occasionally emerges from the curtain of brushstrokes or the outline of a form. A Giacometti-like stick woman with a comic, jaunty bob stalks out from the shadows of a de Kooning woman shape in "Your Puppet"; an arm holding a droopy bag adds a cartoony touch to "The Plumbing." Throughout, Sillman glances over her shoulder at Abstract Expressionism, but her electric, manically hued palette would probably make the Cedar Bar set roll over in their graves. Through May 6. (Sikkema Jenkins, 530 W. 22nd St. 212-929-2262.)

TABLES FOR TWO

BISTRO DU VENT

411 W. 42nd St. (212-239-3060)—Eight o'clock might as well be midnight at this Off Broadway canteen, as the classic rock gets cranked up and the tablecloths are turned. (The halfhearted bistro décor looks as though the owners put in a few red leather banquettes and then realized that the split-level room would never amount to much.) Most of the diners have run off to the clutch of theatres across the street; if you're the type who is habitually forced to take daylight reservations, it's not bad to feel like the last man standing. Let the early birds have their spectacles—this is theatre-district food worth lingering over.

The restaurant has been around only one year—it's a Pasternak, Batali, and Bastianich deal—but it already has a reputation: a year ago the *Post's* Page Six reported that four employees were fired after a security video camera caught them engaged in an after-hours orgy. Now it has a new mystery: what is Laurent Gras, the Michelin-starred chef who made the old Peacock Alley great, doing here? Perhaps he's biding his time while a bigger deal brews; in the meantime, he's turning out pitch-perfect "cuisine du soleil," a tribute to his youth on the Côte d'Azur. One carryover from his silver-domed past: Gras loves to offer a spectacular tasting menu. Even on a bistro budget, he's not going to rob guests of a chance to feast. One recent night, the For the Table menu, which is served family style, featured sweetbreads with mustard and apple, prawns in a saffron-and-zucchini soup, clams gratiné, and a perfect spinach salad. That was the first course. It moved on, with no pomp, to striped bass, lamb saddle, and a spit-roasted poussin. A fresh baguette was supplied to mop up the splendid sauces in their copper pans.

Midday, sunlight fills the room and diners are far enough from the office, at this distant stretch of Forty-second Street, to put work out of their minds. To start, there's an excellent version of a niçoise street-food staple—a chickpea-flour crêpe with smashed-olive paste. And the linguine alle vongole, with an unusually thick sauce of olive oil, white wine, and garlic coating the clams, shows that Gras won't allow even the simplest dishes to be ordinary. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays for lunch and dinner. Entrées $21-$29; For the Table menu $42 per person.)

—*Owen Phillips*

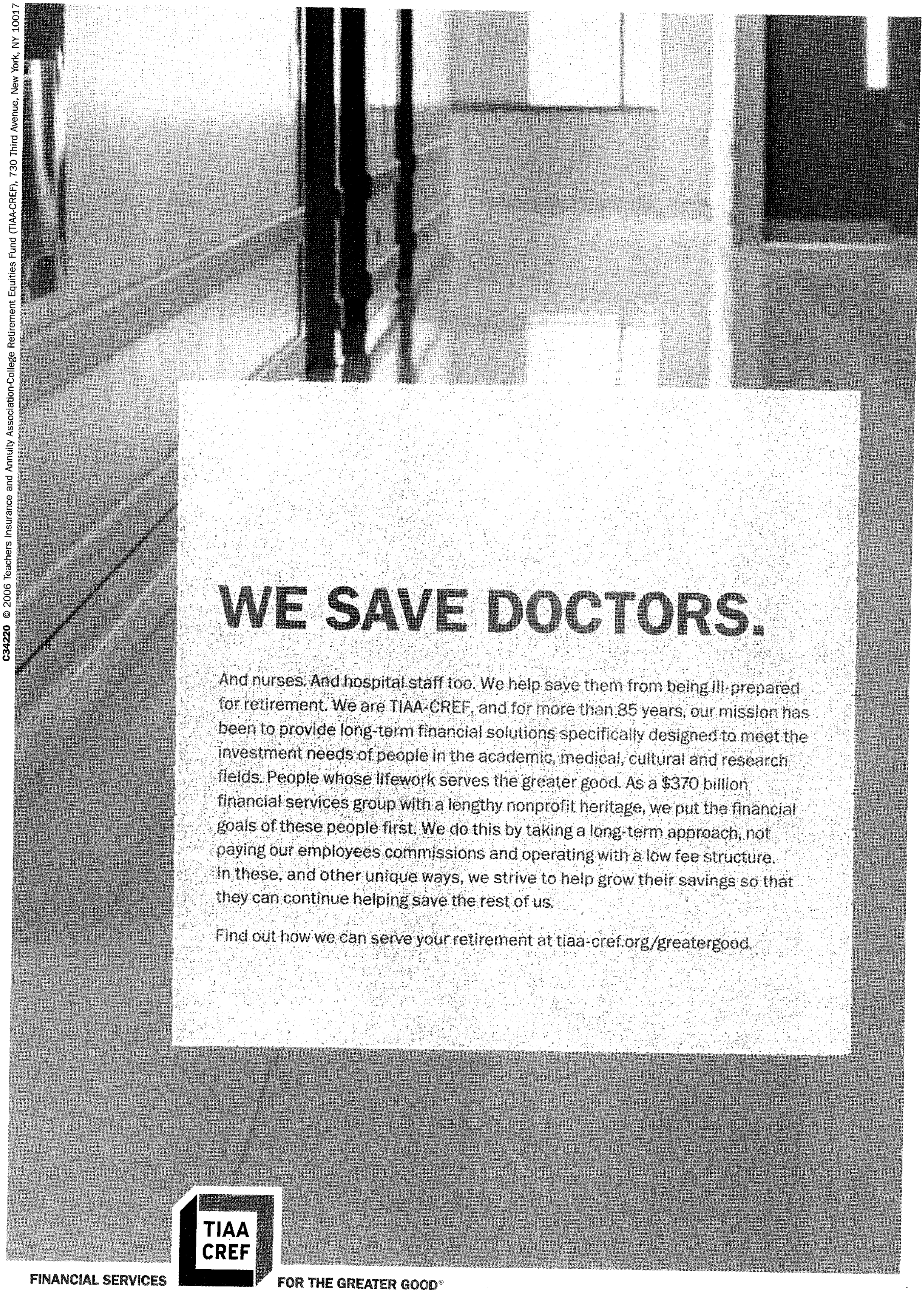
LARRY ZOX
Zox's heraldic abstractions of the sixties—syntheses of color-field painting and geometric design—have been drastically out of fashion for long enough to look daisy fresh again. Zippy diagonals define jigsaw shapes of flat, intense, always odd acrylic color, to effects at once stirring and disorienting. Try as you might to really look at the pictures, you never quite can; they flirt with comprehension, pleasantly. Ragged, mostly black-and-white earlier works and brushy, softly colored later ones wring comparable poetry, though not equal drama, from apparently temperamental irresolution. Through May 16. (Haller, 542 W. 26th St. 212-741-7777.)

Short List

MATTHEW BARNEY: Gladstone, 515 W. 24th St. 212-206-9300. Through May 13. **MICHAEL LIGHT:** Hosfelt, 531 W. 36th St. 212-563-5454. Through May 13.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

THOMAS BAYRLE
The cartoonish, politically strident graphics and films of this German Pop artist, once a Maoist communard,



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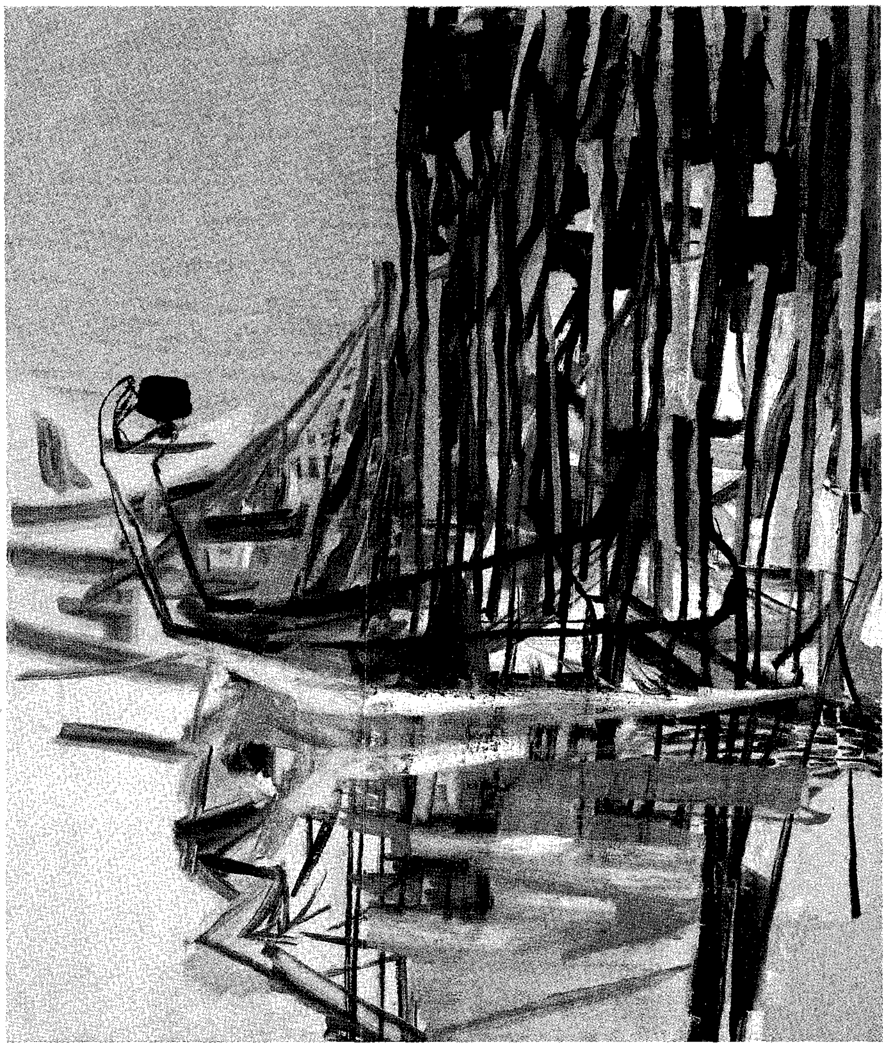


Amy Sillman's "Get the Moon," now at Sikkema Jenkins (see Galleries—Chelsea).

are all but unknown here. Bayrle's first New York solo in twenty-five years will change that, revealing an antic manipulator of dot-matrix forms of reproduction who, in works since 1969, could pass for a computer-assisted newcomer. In silk screens, figures are made of little cameras, mustaches, or wheelbarrows. A bottle is made of bottles. In a film, turning petals frame grainy footage of a sports-car ad. A recent work overlays an image of Condoleezza Rice on woven strips of wood. Why not? Through April 29. (Gavin Brown, 620 Greenwich St. 212-627-5258.)

GALLERIES–BROOKLYN

SIMON FAITHFULL
Forget Paris or New York—Antarctica's the hottest destination among artists. It's central to Pierre Huyghe's film in the Whitney Biennial and to Faithfull's hodgepodge of videos, drawings, and photographs made during a residency with the British Antarctic Survey. Unlike Huyghe's slick rendering, Faithfull's objects paint a scruffier picture, depicting the droning monotony of ice breaking under the ship's hull, frisky seals in an abandoned whaling station, and a weather balloon hoisting an orange protective suit skyward. A series of shakily outlined computerized drawings function like Darwin's dispatches from the Beagle; a particularly poignant example shows the plaque erected by Shackleton's comrades on the spot where he died. Through May 8. (Parker's Box, 193 Grand St. 718-388-2882.)

Short List

"THE MATTHEW BARNEY SHOW": Jack the Pelican, 487 Driggs Ave. 646-644-6756. Through April 29.

DANCE

NEW YORK CITY BALLET
The company's spring repertory season gets under way with seven performances of Balanchine's playful rendition of Shakespeare's fantasy "A Midsummer Night's Dream." The dream is interrupted briefly on Saturday for an evening of works by the prolific Eliot Feld, featuring "Étoile Polaire" (the first of the "Diamond Project" premières this season), a solo for the long-limbed Kaitlyn Gilliland—a promising apprentice with the company—set to Philip Glass's moody piece by the same name. There is also a new solo by Feld, "Ugha-Bugha," set to John Cage, for a guest artist, Wu Kang Chen. The other works on the program span Feld's career, from "Intermezzo" (1969), a romantic piece set to Brahms, to "The Unanswered Question" (1988) and more recent works made for Ballet Tech: "Backchat" and "A Stair Dance." ♦ April 25-26 at 7:30, April 28 at 8, April 29 at 2, April 30 at 3, and May 2 at 7:30: "A Midsummer Night's Dream." ♦ April 29 at 8 (an all-Feld program): "Intermezzo," "The Unanswered Question," "Backchat," "Étoile Polaire," "Ugha-Bugha," and "A Stair Dance." (New York State Theatre, Lincoln Center. 212-870-5570. Through June 25.)

1-2-3 FESTIVAL
At the Joyce, three junior companies with famous older siblings—Ailey II, Taylor 2, and the A.B.T. Studio Company—share an opening night, then take turns presenting full-evening programs. A.B.T.'s younger troupe offers a well-stocked bill, with excerpts from Balanchine's "Divertimento No. 15," a world première by Benjamin Millepied, "Capriccio," set to Paganini, and Seán Curran's "Aria," set to recordings of Renée Fleming singing Handel. Taylor 2 rolls out three repertory favorites—"Company B," "Piazzolla Caldera," and "Esplanade"—in specially edited six-dancer versions. Ailey II's offerings include recent works by Doug Varone and Scott Rink and the crowd-pleasing "Ailey Highlights." (175 Eighth Ave. 212-242-0800. April 25 at 7, April 26-28 at 8, April 29 at 2 and 8, and April 30 at 2 and 7:30. Through May 7. For a complete schedule, see www.joyce.org.)

AKRAM KHAN
With all the awards and attention bestowed upon the Bangladeshi-British thirty-one-year-old, it's easy to forget that his 2004 dance, "Ma," now receiving its U.S. première, is only his second evening-length work. The first, "Kaash," was a stunning, unforced collision of kathak and contemporary dance. "Ma" (the name means "earth" and "mother") is more largely scaled, and more diffuse. Inspired by an Arundhati Roy essay about displaced Indian farmers, the sophomore effort introduces spoken text, with two brief tales by Hanif Kureishi. In one, Khan relates a childhood memory of hanging upside down from a tree, hoping all his questions would fall from his head and be answered by the ground. His dancers (and even the singer), accordingly, spend much of their time inverted. Otherwise, spun by fierce drumbeats and quick-tongued syllables, they're impossibly precise whirlwinds, Khan most of all. (Rose Theatre, 60th St. at Broadway. 212-721-6500. April 26 and April 28-29 at 8.)

AYNSLEY VANDENBROUCKE MOVEMENT GROUP
The work of this talented young choreographer has invited comparisons to Cunningham and Butoh, but it more boldly recalls the very beginnings of modern dance. Her latest piece, "Full Circle," performed in the round with four other women and lit solely by flashlights, spins a tale of community through choreography. Composer Leanne Darling plays her score live on an electronically looped viola. (Baryshnikov Arts Center, 450 W. 37th St. 212-868-4444. April 26 and April 28 at 8 and April 29 at 8 and 9:30.)

MEG STUART
The American expatriate, lionized in Europe, makes a rare U.S. appearance. In creating "Forgeries, Love and Other Matters," the Brussels-based choreographer, known for collaborating with visual artists, worked with another dance-maker, Montreal's Benoît Lachambre. Unusually playful for Stuart, their duet finds the pair crying in camping chairs, set down in a rolling, fur-covered landscape, the only survivors of some unspecified catastrophe. Hahn Rowe plays his filmic score onstage. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. April 27-29 at 7:30.)

RICHARD MOVE
In 2002, Mikhail Baryshnikov played the pretty, haughty lead in Richard Move's danced play "The Show (Achilles Heels)." Now the Baryshnikov Dance Foundation is helping to give "The Show" its New York première, with Rasta Thomas ("Movin' Out") taking over as the cross-dressing Achilles. In front of a series of Pop-art shoji screens, Blondie's Deborah Harry, as Athena, belts into her stick mike, strolling among the smooth dancers, who lip-synch lines culled from Hollywood epics. They segue into soft-edged, mesmerizing blends of modern and ballet—with occasional staccato bursts of everything from ballroom to hip-hop. Katherine Crockett plays a Graham-esque Helen of Troy, and the original rock-infused score is by Arto Lindsay. (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 212-255-5793. April 27-29 and May 2 at 8. Through May 6.)

MONICA BILL BARNES
The frequently loony choreographer brings "Thank You and Goodnight" to Dance New Amsterdam's recently opened performance space. In two duets, four unhinged women in sparkling attire share the stage uneasily, competing for our adoration through a kind of deranged night-club routine. (280 Broadway, at Chambers St. 212-279-4200. April 27-29 at 8 and April 30 at 2.)

MARK JARECKE PROJECT
"Everything Up Until Now and Including," Jarecke's first evening-length solo, presented by Danspace, rigorously abstracts his years of collaboration with the dancer Andrea Johnston, who performs the work in silence. (St. Mark's In-the-Bowery, Second Ave. at 10th St. 212-674-8194. April 27-30 at 8:30.)

NEW YORK THEATRE BALLET
This steadfast chamber company offers two alternating programs: a charming one-hour ballet for

children—Prokofiev's "Cinderella"—and an evening devoted to the exceptional American dancer and choreographer Agnes de Mille, in honor of her centenary year. (Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. 212-307-4100. "Cinderella": April 28 at 10 A.M., April 29 at 11 A.M. and 1, and April 30 at 11 A.M., 1, and 3:30. De Mille celebration: April 28-29 at 7:30.)

MIAMI CITY BALLET
The former N.Y.C.B. star Edward Villella's company has become one of the leading interpreters of Balanchine's ballets outside of New York. The first of two programs at the Tilles Center for the Performing Arts features two of Jerome Robbins's greatest ballets—"Dances at a Gathering" and "Fancy Free." The second sets Balanchine's playful rendition of Italian opera music, "Donizetti Variations," against two modern visions of male-female relationships: Paul Taylor's tango fantasy "Piazzolla Caldera" and Twyla Tharp's ballroom-inspired "Nine Sinatra Songs." (Long Island University, Greenvale, N.Y. 516-299-3100. April 28-29 at 8.)

DANCE SAMPLER MARATHON / SWATI BHISE
Symphony Space's annual twelve-hour dance feast starts off in the morning with kid-friendly courses by Peter Pucci and David Neumann, among others. Then, after a screening of "Fantasia," sneak previews of new work by Complexions, Battleworks, and John Jasperse pile up toward midnight, along with selections by a dozen other companies. Meanwhile, in the Thalia Theatre, Swati Bhise and her bharata-natyam ensemble present "Stree: Facets of a Woman." (Broadway at 95th St. 212-864-5400. April 29 from 11:30 A.M. to midnight.)

PAUL TAYLOR DANCE COMPANY
At the Queens Theatre in the Park, the company performs three well-liked revivals from its March City Center season. In "Dandelion Wine" (2000), dancers flit across the boards to the busy-bee notes of a Locatelli concerto, until they get tangled up like kids in a game of Twister. The grotesque, elastic-spined creatures of "Dust" (1977) are hunched over and spastic, but it takes only a costume change to transform the versatile company into the upright, magnanimous lords and ladies of the baroque fantasy "Brandenburgs" (1988). (718-760-0064. April 29 at 2 and 8 and April 30 at 2.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA
April 26 at 7:30 and April 29 at 8:30: Deborah Voigt, adding her name to a list that includes Callas, Tebaldi, and Behrens, is taking up the title role in **"Tosca"** at the Met. Franco Farina and James Morris are Cavaradossi and Scarpia, respectively; Carlo Rizzi conducts. ♦ April 27 at 8: **"Le Nozze di Figaro,"** with Soile Isokoski, Andrea Rost, Alice Coote, John Hancock, and John Relyea; Mark Wigglesworth. ♦ April 28 at 8: **"Don Pasquale,"** Otto Schenk's swan-song production for the Met, is an entertaining and vocally high-powered romp that features Anna Netrebko, Mariusz Kwiecien, Simone Alaimo, and Juan Diego Flórez; Derrick Inouye. (This is the final performance.) ♦ April 29 at 1: Robert Wilson's famously static production of **"Lohengrin,"** bathed continually in deep-blue light, has endured as a powerful minimalist expression that enhances the nobility of the story and the refulgent beauty of the music. The cast of eminent Wagnerians includes Karita Mattila, Ben Heppner, René Pape, and, making her début, the fresh-voiced American dramatic soprano Luana DeVol; Philippe Auguin draws a beautifully disciplined performance from the orchestra and chorus. ♦ May 1 at 8: **"Rigoletto,"** with Norah Amsellem, Nancy Fabiola Herrera, Paolo Gavanelli (in the title role), Roberto Aronica, and Robert Lloyd; Asher Fisch. ♦ May 2 at 7:30: Last season's hit production of Handel's **"Rodelinda"** returns with several of its original stars—Renée Fleming, Stephanie Blythe, Kobie van Rensburg, and John Relyea—as well as two newcomers in the countertenor roles, Andreas Scholl and Christophe Dumaux; Patrick Summers. (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000.)

JUILLIARD OPERA CENTER: "MISS LONELYHEARTS"
Lowell Liebermann's opera (with a libretto by J. D. McClatchy), commissioned for the school's centennial celebrations, is a transformation of Nathanael West's novella about a love-advice columnist driven to despair by his correspondents' desperate pleas. Ken Cazan directs; Andreas Delfs conducts. (Peter Jay Sharp Theatre, 155 W. 65th St. 212-721-6500. April 26 and April 28 at 8 and April 30 at 2.)

MANHATTAN SCHOOL OF MUSIC OPERA THEATRE: "CENDRILLON"
Massenet's scintillating gem of an opera (based on Perrault's "Cinderella") is performed by an eager student cast. Chuck Hudson directs; Laurent Pillot conducts. (Borden Auditorium, Broadway at 122nd St. 917-493-4428. April 26 and April 28 at 8 and April 30 at 2:30.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
Colin Davis, always a welcome guest with the Philharmonic, knows what he's good at and knows what his audience wants. In his latest program, the first in a two-week residency, he conducts music by Berlioz ("Nuits d'Été," with the tenor Ian Bostridge) and Mozart (the "Haffner" Serenade, featuring the violin solos of the orchestra's concertmaster, Glenn Dicterow). (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5656. April 27 at 7:30 and April 28-29 at 8.)

BARGEMUSIC
The East Coast Chamber Orchestra, a peripatetic group of graduates from the country's top conservatories, will crowd the barge's little stage to offer works for strings by Britten (the Simple Symphony), Mendelssohn, Tchaikovsky (the Serenade), and Jennifer Higdon. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083. April 27 at 7:30. For complete schedule, see www.bargemusic.org.)

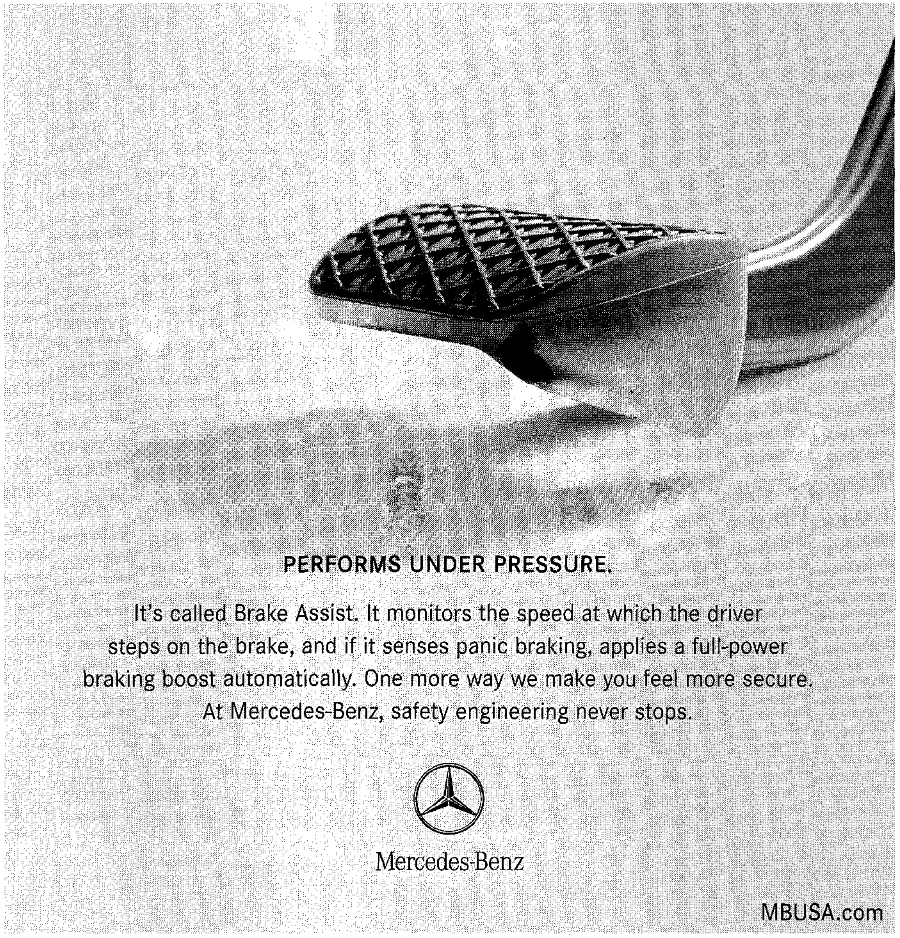
YOUNG PEOPLE'S CHORUS OF NEW YORK CITY: "TRANSIENT GLORY"
Francisco J. Núñez's excellent young charges sing new works by prominent composers, most of whom have never written for children's choir before, including Mark Adamo, Derek Bermel, John Corigliano, Thea Musgrave, and Rufus Wainwright (excerpts from "Bloom," a collaboration with the Stephen Petronio dance company). (New York Society for Ethical Culture, 2 W. 64th St. 212-415-5500. April 29 at 8.)

YALE PHILHARMONIA
The Yale School of Music's professional-rank ensemble comes down from New Haven to perform works by Shostakovich (the First Cello Concerto, with Jian Wang), Sibelius (the Symphony No. 2 in D Major), and a faculty member, Aaron Jay Kernis (the exuberant "New Era Dance"). (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. April 30 at 8.)

RECITALS

CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY OF LINCOLN CENTER
April 25 at 7:30: Brahms's ever-popular Piano Quartet in G Minor anchors a program that also includes novelties by Boccherini (the Guitar Quintet No. 4, "Fandango") and Chausson (the Piano Trio). The performers include the guitarist Oren Fader, the cellist David Soyer, and the pianist Adam Neiman. (Alice Tully Hall.) ♦ April 27 at 6:45: In one of the society's occasional "Double Exposure" concerts, a group of musicians that includes the soprano Susan Narucki and the Daedalus Quartet offers works by the Russian composers Victor Kissine and Vladislav Shoot, repeating them after a break for discussion in between. (Rose Studio.) (212-875-5788.)

LANG LANG
The flamboyantly virtuosic pianist makes a foray into Vladimir Horowitz territory, offering such chestnuts as Chopin's Sonata in B Minor, Schu-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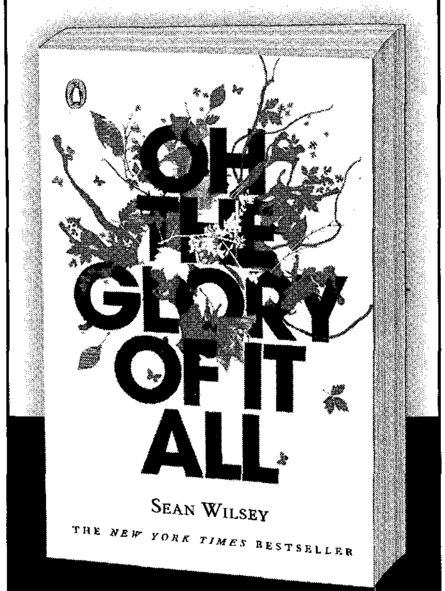

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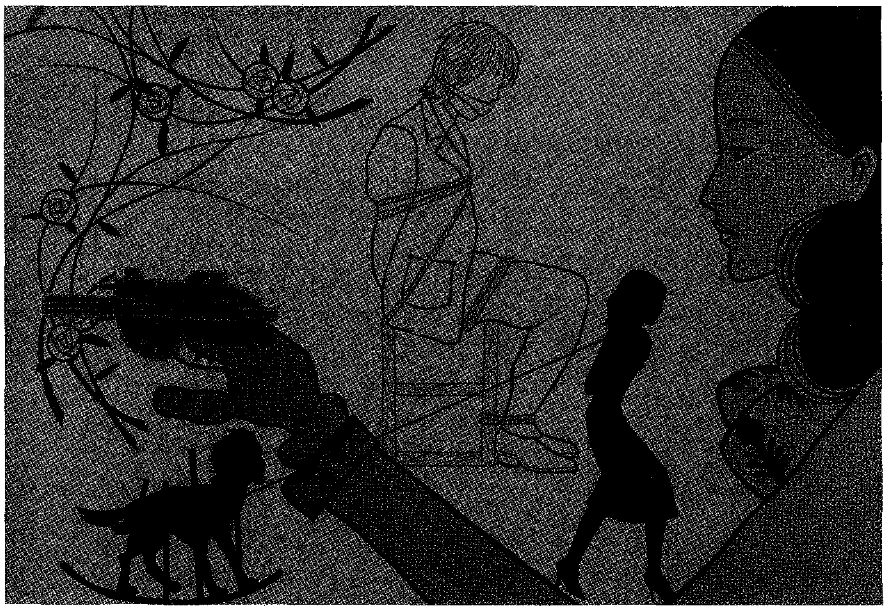
mann's "Kinderszenen," and Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2 (in the Horowitz arrangement). (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. April 26 at 8.)

LISZT PIANO MUSIC CELEBRATION
Franz Liszt's piano music is of a breathtaking variety and range, and this multi-week festival, held at the Piano Salon of Yamaha Artist Services, can hardly contain it all. Two promising young pianists—Matthew Cameron and Renana Gutman—share a concert with the estimable Jerome Lowenthal, dividing among them the three books of the composer's "Années de Pèlerinage." (689 Fifth Ave., at 54th St. 212-339-9995. April 27 at 7.)



"Lady Vengeance," opening April 28, completes Park Chanwook's revenge trilogy.

HIROSHI TANABE

MARTIN KASIK
The up-and-coming young pianist—a prizewinning student of such mentors as Lazar Berman and Christian Zacharias—continues the Metropolitan Museum's "Piano Forte" series with a recital of works by Beethoven (featuring the Sonata in D Major, Op. 10) and Schubert (the Four Impromptus, Op. 90). (Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. 212-570-3949. April 27 at 8.)

CUTTING EDGE CONCERTS: NEWBAND
Dean Drummond's ensemble, the rightful inheritor of Harry Partch's inestimable collection of homemade instruments, performs several important Partch works (including "Seventeen Lyrics by Li Po," with the baritone Robert Osborne) along with Drummond's "Mars Face" (featuring the violinist Tom Chiu). (Greenwich House Music School, 46 Barrow St. 212-242-4770. April 27 at 8.)

EMERSON STRING QUARTET: SHOSTAKOVICH
The twentieth-century master's complete string quartets get a workout from the energetic and super-disciplined ensemble, in five installments that continue into next week. April 27 at 8: Quartets Nos. 1 (in C Major, "Springtime"), 2, and 3 (in F Major, one of the great works of the cycle). ♦ April 30 at 5: Quartets Nos. 4, 6, and 5 (in B-Flat Major, a piece of almost symphonic scope). (Alice Tully Hall. 212-721-6500.)

NEW MUSIC AT MERKIN CONCERT HALL
April 27 at 8: The baritone Thomas Buckner, one of the prime movers behind the "Interpretations" concert series, takes the stage (with some friends) to perform works by such composers as David Darling ("Moments of Longing"), Mel Graves, and Wadada Leo Smith. ♦ April 30 at 8: The Oberlin Contemporary Music Ensemble, conducted by Timothy Weiss, comes to Merkin with a prominent guest soloist (the pianist Marilyn Nonken), performing new pieces by Lewis Nielson and Jason Eckardt along with masterworks by Berg (the Chamber Concerto) and Adès (the Chamber Symphony, Op. 2). ♦ May 1 at 8: Oren Fader, an increasingly prominent guitarist about town, is the guest of Speculum Musicae in a concert of music by Andriessen ("Hout"), Birtwistle, Dufourt, and Foss ("Paradigm," a beguiling tribute to late-nineteen-sixties "happenings"). (212-501-3330.)

BRENTANO STRING QUARTET
The smart and driven group offers Debussy's Quartet in G Minor as a prelude to a new work by the traditionalist David Horne (String Quartet No. 4) and to Shostakovich's death-haunted Quartet No. 15 in E-Flat Minor. (Weill Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. April 28 at 7:30.)

JERUSALEM QUARTET
The vibrant young ensemble, performing in honor of Israel Independence Day, offers the New York première of a new work by Avner Dorman along with masterworks by Barber and Brahms (the Piano Quintet, with Benjamin Hochman). (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500. April 29 at 8.)

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC ENSEMBLES
Members of the orchestra take a busman's holiday, performing works by Ravel (the "Introduction and Allegro"), Brahms (the Piano Trio No. 2 in C Major), and John Sichel. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 212-501-3330. April 30 at 3.)

MOVIES OPENING

AKEELAH AND THE BEE
In this drama, a troubled girl is inspired by a teacher to compete in spelling bees. Directed by Doug Atchison. Opening April 28. (In wide release.)

ALTERNATIVE FREEDOM
A documentary by Twila Raftu and Shaun Cronin, about the effect of copyright enforcement on artistic creation. Opening April 27. (Pioneer Theatre.)

ARMY OF SHADOWS
The U.S. première of Jean-Pierre Melville's 1969 drama about the French Resistance, starring Lino Ventura and Simone Signoret. In French. Opening April 28. (Film Forum.)

CLEAN
Reviewed below in Now Playing. Opening April 28. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Sunshine Cinema.)

THE DEATH OF MR. LAZARESCU
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. In Romanian. Opening April 26. (Film Forum.)

GUYS AND BALLS
A comedy from Germany about a small-town baker who forms a soccer team for gay men.

Directed by Sherry Horman. In German. Opening April 28. (Quad Cinema.)

LADY VENGEANCE
A woman wrongly imprisoned for kidnapping seeks revenge after her release. Directed by Park Chanwook. In Korean. Opening April 28. (Angelika Film Center.)

POLICE BEAT
Robinson Devor directed this drama, about a Senegalese bicycle cop in Seattle. In English and Wolof. Opening April 28. (Anthology Film Archives.)

RV
In this comedy, directed by Barry Sonnenfeld, a family takes a motor-home vacation. Starring Robin Williams. Opening April 28. (In wide release.)

STICK IT
A comedy about a rebellious girl (Missy Peregrym) who is sent to a gymnastics camp led by a tough coach (Jeff Bridges). Directed by Jessica Bendinger. Opening April 28. (In wide release.)

SUITE HABANA
A blend of documentary and drama, directed by Fernando Pérez, about daily life in Havana today. In Spanish. Opening April 28. (Cinema Village.)

THREE TIMES
A trio of romantic dramas set in 1911, 1966, and 2005, directed by Hou Hsiao-Hsien. In Mandarin and Taiwanese. Opening April 26. (IFC Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

UNITED 93
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening April 28. (In wide release.)

WATER
A drama, directed by Deepa Mehta, set in India in the nineteen-thirties, about a widow in love with a lower-caste man. In Hindi. Opening April 28. (Angelika Film Center and Paris.)

THE WHORE'S SON
A woman from the former Yugoslavia emigrates to Austria and, unbeknownst to her son, works as a prostitute. Directed by Michael Sturminger. In German. Opening April 28. (Quad Cinema.)

NOW PLAYING

AMERICAN DREAMZ
A busy, ambitious new film from Paul Weitz, who made "About a Boy" and, before that, "American Pie." Whether the dreamz are more authentically American than pie is another matter. The new film stars Hugh Grant as the coarse-tongued English host of a top-ranking television talent contest. In his quest to find the next batch of freaks and hopefuls to appear on the show, the host happens first upon Sally (Mandy Moore), an innocent small-town schemer with a lumpen boyfriend (Chris Klein), and then upon Omer (Sam Golzari), an Arab terrorist on a personal crusade not so much to blow up the world as to dazzle it with show tunes. Add to the mix a United States President (Dennis Quaid) who appears on the show in order to boost his ratings, and the makings of a scathing farce are all in place. Which is where they stay. Weitz's movie has plenty of recognizable pet hates, starting with the current Administration, but its scorn feels petulant and scattershot instead of rousing or principled, and the characters tend to swerve in unhelpful directions. What's the point in a satire of "American Idol," when the result leaves you less aghast than a viewing of the actual program?—*Anthony Lane* (Reviewed in our issue of 4/24/06.) (In wide release.)

BRASÍLIA 18%
Flying from California to his native Brazil, Dr. Olavo Bilac is visited at his seat by a voluptuous naked woman, but the promised tropical sex romp doesn't come off. The traveller is a respected forensic pathologist who has been called in to identify a beautiful young body believed to be that of a senator's assistant, whose boyfriend, a young filmmaker, is accused of killing her in a jealous rage. But as the investigation continues, the doctor discovers that his work is being used to conceal deep levels of political and financial corruption. The director, Nelson Pereira dos Santos, widely regarded as the father of the modern Brazilian cinema, is seventy-seven years old. He claims that this film will be his last, and not a frame of it is wasted; he is angry at the way things are done in Brazil, and he shows it with the crisp assertiveness of a prophecy. And, like all old men, he revels in carnal delight and recalls its seductive power: the woman on the plane is the doctor's late wife, Laura, and she is merely a vision—Bilac's, Nelson Pereira's, and the viewer's. In Portuguese.—*Richard Brody* (Tribeca Film Festival; April 28, April 30, and May 1.)

BRICK
The young director Rian Johnson, after raising money from his friends and parents, pulled off his dream project, a film noir. But in Johnson's version of noir, the inexorable Sam Spade-type detective is a mop-headed student, Brendan (Joseph Gordon-Levitt), wearing a sweatshirt and wire-rim glasses, and the setting is not the nighttime big city of Hollywood imagination—the usual claustrophobic noir precinct—but the preposterously sunny skies and wide-open spaces of San Clemente, California. The story, which involves a dead girl and a student drug gang, has the semi-unfathomable complexity of "The Maltese Falcon" and "The Big Sleep," and the characters, lounging against the blank outside wall of the school, speak in cryptic jive patter ("Bulls would only gum it," i.e., cops are dumb). "Brick" is often quite funny, but not in a campy or condescending way—Johnson never makes the distance from the original models seem laughable. The movie develops its own kind of goofy tensions: Johnson renders the wide-open spaces of a school yard as menacing as the darkened rooms of a Warner Bros. thriller.—*David Denby* (4/3/06) (Angelika Film Center.)

CLEAN
Olivier Assayas cast his ex-wife, Maggie Cheung, to play Emily Wang, a onetime v.j., now the belligerent, heroin-addicted wife of a semi-famous rock singer (James Johnston). Her husband dies of an overdose, and she is imprisoned for possession. When she gets out, she must fight for her life and for her young son, who is in the custody of her husband's parents, Albrecht (Nick Nolte) and Rosemary (Martha Henry). Assayas keeps the action moving between Vancouver, London, and Paris, cogently underscoring the sense that Emily, clean of heroin but still popping pills, can't find the right place to be. Nolte, as her son's caretaker, cunningly portrays a polite, loving man who gets what he wants without appearing to know what that is. But the film belongs to Cheung, who unhappily staggers through the debauched wasteland of her milieu, stunned but determined in spite of herself. In English, French, and Cantonese.—*Shauna Lyon* (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Sunshine Cinema.)

THE FLOWERS OF ST. FRANCIS
The Italian title of Roberto Rossellini's naturalistic tribute to transcendent faith says it all: "Francesco, Giullare di Dio"—"Francis, God's Jester." As the joyful visionary and his band of holy innocents romp through the thirteenth-century Italian countryside, they resemble nothing so much as the kind of cult you'd pay to have your child kidnapped from. They preach to warlords and landowners as if in quest of the beatings they receive, exemplifying the divine madness of their radical Christian devotion. Rossellini depicts these brazen geniuses of humility with an expressive simplicity akin to Giotto's; his nonjudgmental clarity reflects both the way they lived and his sense of wonder that anyone could ever have done so. Released in 1950. In Italian. (Shown with "My Dad Is 100 Years Old.")—*R.B.* (Tribeca Film Festival; April 29 and May 1.)

FRIENDS WITH MONEY
The independent writer-director Nicole Holofcener had a fresh idea for a movie: how would three well-off married women (Catherine Keener, Frances McDormand, Joan Cusack), living in Los Angeles, sustain their friendship with a younger woman who is unmarried, broke, working as a housekeeper, and given to meaningless relationships with jerks? By most standards, and particularly by wealthy Los Angeles standards, Olivia (Jennifer Aniston) is a loser, and the wealthy, notoriously, do not like to hang out with losers. In a series of tense ensemble scenes, Holofcener explores not only the gossip and shifting alliances in these relationships but the three marriages as well. The trouble with this scheme, however, is that Olivia has no drives or hopes or powerful regrets; she has nothing to say, and Aniston, a very limited actress, does most of her work with her lower lip, which she wrin-

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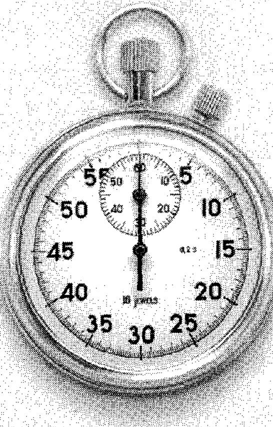

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kles and tucks under the upper one. She pulls so little out of herself that we lose all interest in her by the middle of the picture. But there are good bits from the other performers, particularly McDormand as a woman who has everything going for her but throws fits over trivialities.—*D.D.* (4/17/06) (In wide release.)

I AM A SEX ADDICT
Dedicated smut-hunters will want to stay away from this film, for the good reason that it offers only a minimum—and not always a bare minimum—of actual sex. It is the first word of the title, not the fourth, that dominates the picture, which is essentially the selective erotic memoir of a San Francisco filmmaker named Caveh Zahedi. Addressing the camera and dipping into a staged series of flashbacks (otherwise known as wishful thinking), Zahedi describes his cracked marriages and his fixation with hookers. He seems incapable of lending order to these recollections, constantly having to back up and start again, and that fumbling geekiness touches his account with an exasperating charm—something of an antidote to the frictionless anecdotes of the classic seducer. Anybody worried that the movie will objectify women should be reassured by the actresses hired to play his paramours, who are, for the most part, far more in command of their bodies and souls than Zahedi can ever hope to be. He resembles a dark, undangerous Harpo Marx; if you can't imagine such a creature, go see him for yourself.—*A.L.* (4/24/06) (IFC Center.)

MY DAD IS 100 YEARS OLD
Roberto Rossellini was born in 1906; as a centenary tribute to him, Isabella Rossellini, his daughter with Ingrid Bergman, and Guy Maddin, the Canadian mock-expressionist director, join forces in a brief but extravagant biographical portrait. Taking off from Isabella's childhood reminiscences, Maddin depicts Rossellini as a great shaking paunch—a grotesquely fleshy substitute for the brilliant and original mind to which her script gives voice. She sets her father in contentious fictional dialogue with filmmakers who found his intellectual realism inimical—Hitchcock, Fellini, David O. Selznick—and she herself impersonates them, as well as playing her mother, creating a poignant meditation on their meteoric collaboration and romance. In seventeen touchingly loopy minutes, Guy Maddin and Isabella Rossellini say more about the filmmaker and his art than hours of DVD-extra talking heads. (Shown with "The Flowers of St. Francis.")—*R.B.* (Tribeca Film Festival; April 29 and May 1.)

THE NOTORIOUS BETTIE PAGE
A bio-pic devoted to a body—Gretchen Mol's body, which is seen in every degree of cladding, from full to scanty to blissfully naked. Mol plays a real-life pinup queen of the fifties, Bettie Page, who appeared in coy nudie magazines and in highly unconvincing and frequently out-of-focus lesbian bondage movies with titles like "Sally's Punishment." As re-created by Mary Harron, who both wrote the screenplay (with Guinevere Turner) and directed, Bettie was a nice, devout girl from Nashville who never quite understood the extraordinary effect her pictures had on other people. Smut was a low-rent, casually lousy scene in those days, and Bettie's innocence fit right in. Satirizing the hysteria caused by a naïve girl who likes to disrobe is a good joke, but there is a problem with Harron's affectionate, lighthearted approach—it leaches all the danger out of the subject. In this movie, there isn't any genuine power in erotic imagery or any madness in perversion. Shot in noirish black-and-white and dazzling color.—*D.D.* (4/17/06) (In wide release.)

SCARY MOVIE 4
Not as uproarious as No. 3, the new and sodden installment in the series lays bare the perils of parody. The director David Zucker and his screenwriters hang their garlands of pop-culture takeoffs (on "Saw," "The Village," "The Grudge," Tom Cruise on "Oprah," and much, much more) on a through-line that spoofs "War of the Worlds," and it doesn't work. The sendup seems all too similar to the Spielberg fantasy, and to a real attack; no amount of Three Stooges-like shenanigans and bathroom humor, even when funny, dulls the sting. But Anna Faris, whose stratospheric ditz quotient is somewhere between that of Thelma Todd and Judy Holliday, proves again that she has far better things awaiting her.—*R.B.* (In wide release.)

RACHEL DOMM

THANK YOU FOR SMOKING
Nick Naylor (Aaron Eckhart), the chief spokesman for the tobacco lobby in Washington, is handsome and likable, a mixture of swagger and impudent candor. Nick knows that his arguments in favor of smoking are rubbish, but he enjoys the game of spin too much to give it up. This shrewdly entertaining satirical comedy, adapted by Jason Reitman (son of the veteran director Ivan Reitman) from Christopher Buckley's 1994 novel, loves the brazen moxie of "sin" lobbyists without being fooled by them. The comic highlight of the movie is the regular lunch sessions that Nick holds with the lobbyists for the alcohol and firearms industries (Maria Bello and David Koechner)—the three of them, boasting of the lethality of their respective clients, might be doing a recurring skit on "Saturday Night Live." When Nick gets written up by a seductive reporter (Katie Holmes) from the Washington *Probe*, his life goes into a tailspin. Jason Reitman's direction is fast-moving and witty; the movie is a winner.—*D.D.* (4/3/06) (In wide release.)

Also Playing

ATL: In wide release. **SILENT HILL:** In wide release. **SOMERSAULT:** In wide release. **TAKE THE LEAD:** In wide release. **THE WILD:** In wide release.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES
32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5181)—"New-Filmmakers Presents." April 26 at 7: Short-film program. ♦ April 26 at 8: "Xavier" (2004, Yuri Alves). ♦ The films of BB Optics. April 26 at 8: Short films by Bill Brand (1972-2005). ♦ "Essential Cinema." April 27 at 7:30: "Symphonie Diagonale" (1924, Viking Eggeling; silent) and "Rien Que les Heures" (1928, Alberto Cavalcanti; silent). ♦ April 28 at 8: Short films by Maya Deren (1943-46). ♦ April 29 at 8: "Zvenigora" (1928, Alexander Dovzhenko; silent). ♦ April 29 at 8: "Arsenal" (1928-29, Dovzhenko; silent). ♦ April 30 at 6: "Earth" (1929-30, Dovzhenko). ♦ April 30 at 8: "The Parson's Widow" (1921, Carl Theodor Dreyer; silent with German intertitles). ♦ Special screening. April 27 at 8: "Clavigo" (1970, Marcel Ophuls; in German).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-636-4100)—"*Village Voice* Best of 2005." April 26 at 7: "The Proposition" (2005, John Hillcoat). ♦ Through May 10: The films of Mikio Naruse. All films are in Japanese. April 27 at 6:50 and 9:15: "Wife! Be Like a Rose!" (1935). ♦ April 28 at 6:50 and 9:30: "Sound of the Mountain" (1954). The 6:50 show will be followed by a Q. & A. with Phillip Lopate. ♦ April 29 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Repast" (1951). ♦ April 30 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Mother" (1952). ♦ May 2 at 7: "Anzukko" (1958). ♦ Tribute to Tony Leung Ka-fai. May 1 at 8: "Everlasting Regret" (2005, Stanley Kwan; in Mandarin), followed by a Q. & A. with Leung.

FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—In revival. April 26-May 2 at 1:10, 3:15, 5:30, 7:35, and 9:40: "Repulsion" (1965, Roman Polanski).

FLORENCE GOULD HALL
55 E. 59th St. (212-355-6160)—Through May 30: The films of André Téchiné. May 2 at 12:30, 4, and 7: "Ma Saison Préférée" (1993; in French). The 7 P.M. screening will be presented by Richard Brown.

IFC CENTER
323 Sixth Ave., at W. 3rd St. (212-924-7771)—In revival. April 28-30 at noon: "I Live in Fear" (1955, Akira Kurosawa; in Japanese). ♦ "Waverly Midnights." April 28-29: "Coffy" (1973, Jack Hill).

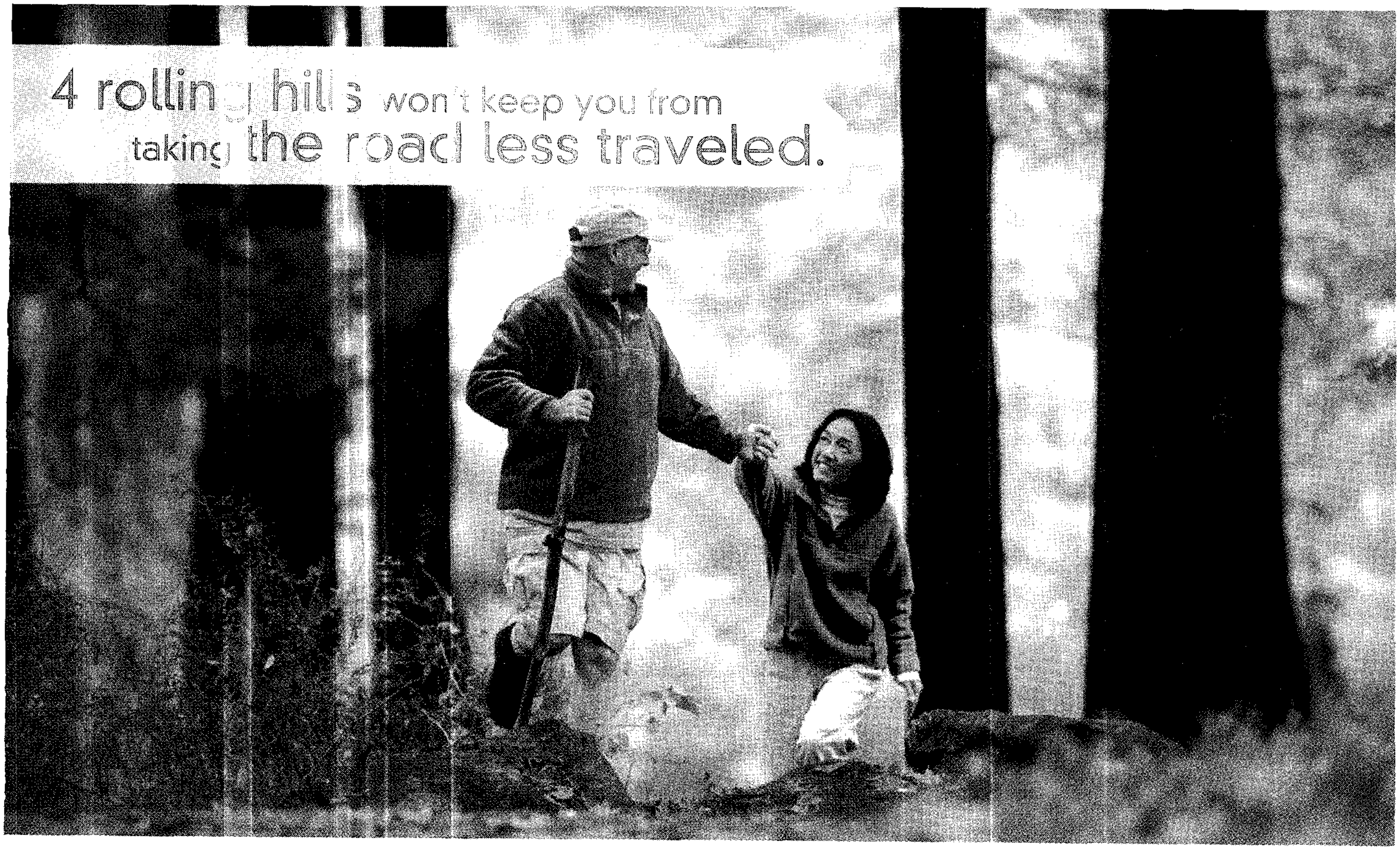
THE JEWISH MUSEUM
1109 Fifth Ave., at 92nd St. (212-423-3337)—"Freud on Film." April 27 at 6:30: "Young Dr. Freud" (1976, Axel Corti; in German).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9480)—"Rediscovering Roscoe: The Careers of 'Fatty' Arbuckle." For more information, go to www.moma.org. April 26 at 6: "Directing After the Scandal," part two, program ten (1925-26). ♦ April 27 at 8:30: "Directing After the Scandal," part three, program eleven (1926-27). ♦ April 29 at 8:30: "Ca-

CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
POST-BARNEY

A star for attaining stardom—a star star—Matthew Barney has won much bewildered notice in the popular press for a new film, "Drawing Restraint 9," in which he and Björk have at each other with flensing knives on a Japanese whaling ship. Does that sound exciting? It is to snooze. A show of gigantic sculptures at Gladstone, adapting elements of the film, is numbingly hermetic and toneless. So it's pleasant to report that Barney's celebrity, at least, proves fecund, in "The Matthew Barney Show," at a Brooklyn gallery called Jack the Pelican. About thirty mostly young, often amateurish artists range from cultists (worshipful portraits) and pseudo-cultists (a button reads "I'm a Barney Bitch") to outright lampooners, all aswirl in the Barney vortex of inexplicable solipsism. The best works are videos: "Cremassticparkinator III," a montage of "Cremaster" and Hollywood clips by John Allen Gibel and Nathan Kukulski, and "Cremistress 6: The Centered Polenta" by Carolyn Sortor, in which female attendants of a mythic hero solemnly install a birthday cake on his raised behind.

—*Peter Schjeldahl*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Patients taking aspirin and the elderly are at increased risk for stomach bleeding and ulcers.

Tell your doctor if you:
- Are pregnant
- Have a history of ulcers or bleeding in the stomach or intestines
- Have high blood pressure or heart failure
- Have kidney or liver problems

People with aspirin-sensitive asthma or allergic reactions due to aspirin or other arthritis medicines or certain drugs called sulfonamides should not take CELEBREX.

Prescription CELEBREX should be used exactly as prescribed at the lowest dose possible and for the shortest time needed.

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Please see important information about CELEBREX and other NSAIDs on next page.

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(celecoxib capsules)

Medication Guide
for Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs)

(See the end of this Medication Guide for a list of prescription NSAID medicines.)

What is the most important information I should know about medicines called Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs)?

NSAID medicines may increase the chance of a heart attack or stroke that can lead to death.
This chance increases:

- with longer use of NSAID medicines
- in people who have heart disease

NSAID medicines should never be used right before or after a heart surgery called a "coronary artery bypass graft (CABG)."
NSAID medicines can cause ulcers and bleeding in the stomach and intestines at any time during treatment. Ulcers and bleeding:

- can happen without warning symptoms
- may cause death

The chance of a person getting an ulcer or bleeding increases with:

- taking medicines called "corticosteroids" and "anticoagulants"
- longer use
- smoking
- drinking alcohol
- older age
- having poor health

NSAID medicines should only be used:

- *exactly as prescribed*
- at the lowest dose possible for your treatment
- for the shortest time needed

What are Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs)?

NSAID medicines are used to treat pain and redness, swelling, and heat (inflammation) from medical conditions such as:

- different types of arthritis
- menstrual cramps and other types of short-term pain

Who should not take a Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drug (NSAID)?

Do not take an NSAID medicine:

- if you had an asthma attack, hives, or other allergic reaction with aspirin or any other NSAID medicine
- for pain right before or after heart bypass surgery

Tell your healthcare provider:

- about all of your medical conditions.
- about all of the medicines you take. NSAIDs and some other medicines can interact with each other and cause serious side effects. ***Keep a list of your medicines to show to your health care provider and pharmacist.***
- if you are pregnant. ***NSAID medicines should not be used by pregnant women late in their pregnancy.***
- if you are breastfeeding. **Talk to your doctor.**

What are the possible side effects of Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs)?

Serious side effects include:

- heart attack
- stroke
- high blood pressure
- heart failure from body swelling (fluid retention)
- kidney problems including kidney failure
- bleeding and ulcers in the stomach and intestine
- low red blood cells (anemia)
- life-threatening skin reactions
- life-threatening allergic reactions
- liver problems including liver failure
- asthma attacks in people who have asthma

Other side effects include:

- stomach pain
- constipation
- diarrhea
- gas
- heartburn
- nausea
- vomiting
- dizziness

Get emergency help right away if you have any of the following symptoms:

- shortness of breath or trouble breathing
- chest pain
- weakness in one part or side of your body
- slurred speech
- swelling of the face or throat

Stop your NSAID medicine and call your healthcare provider right away if you have any of the following symptoms:

- nausea
- more tired or weaker than usual
- itching
- your skin or eyes look yellow
- stomach pain
- flu-like symptoms
- vomit blood
- there is blood in your bowel movement or it is black and sticky like tar
- skin rash or blisters with fever
- unusual weight gain
- swelling of the arms and legs, hands and feet

These are not all the side effects with NSAID medicines. Talk to your healthcare provider or pharmacist for more information about NSAID medicines.

Other information about Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs)

- *Aspirin is an NSAID medicine but it does not increase the chance of a heart attack. Aspirin can cause bleeding in the brain, stomach, and intestines. Aspirin can also cause ulcers in the stomach and intestines.*
- Some of these NSAID medicines are sold in lower doses without a prescription (over-the-counter). Talk to your healthcare provider before using over-the-counter NSAIDs for more than 10 days.

NSAID medicines that need a prescription

Generic Name	Tradename
Celecoxib	Celebrex
Diclofenac	Cataflam, Voltaren, Arthrotec (combined with misoprostol)
Diflunisal	Dolobid
Etodolac	Lodine, Lodine XL
Fenoprofen	Nalfon, Nalfon 200
Flurbiprofen	Ansaid
Ibuprofen	Motrin, Tab-Profen, Vicoprofen (combined with hydrocodone), Combunox (combined with oxycodone)
Indomethacin	Indocin, Indocin SR, Indo-Lemmon, Indomethagan
Ketoprofen	Oruvail
Ketorolac	Toradol
Mefenamic Acid	Ponstel
Meloxicam	Mobic
Nabumetone	Relafen
Naproxen	Naprosyn, Anaprox, Anaprox DS, EC-Naproxyn, Naprelan, Naprapac (copackaged with lansoprazole)
Oxaprozin	Daypro
Piroxicam	Feldene
Sulindac	Clinoril
Tolmetin	Tolectin, Tolectin DS, Tolectin 600

This Medication Guide has been approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

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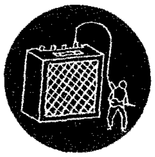
reer Recap," program twelve (1915-1933). ♦ May 1 at 6: "Career Overview," program one (1913-33). ♦ "Baseball and American Culture." April 26 at 8: "The Natural" (1984, Barry Levinson). ♦ April 30 at 2: "A League of Their Own" (1992, Penny Marshall). ♦ April 30 at 5: "Cobb" (1994, Ron Shelton). ♦ "Ziegler Film, Berlin." All films are in German, except where noted. April 27 at 6:15: "The Rapoports—Our Three Lives" (2004, Sissi Hüetlin and Britta Wauer). ♦ April 27 at 8 and April 30 at 4:30: "Solo for Clarinet" (1998, Nico Hoffmann). ♦ April 28 at 7: "The Publisher" (2001, Bernd Böhlich). ♦ April 29 at 1: "Malou" (1981, Jeanine April 26 at 7: "Love and Death" (1975, Woody Allen). ♦ April 26 at 9: "Blackballed: The Bobby Dukes Story" (2004, Brent Sersen).

SUNSHINE CINEMA

143 E. Houston St. (212-330-8182)—"Sunshine@Midnight." April 28-29: "Showgirls" (1995, Paul Verhoeven), presented by Peaches Christ.

THALIA THEATRE

Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. (212-864-5400)—Special screenings. April 30 at 2 and May 2 at 8: "Citizen Kane" (1941, Orson Welles). ♦ April 30 at 4:30 and 6:45 and May 2 at 6: "A Touch of Greatness" (2005, Leslie Sullivan).



POP NOTES
HIGH MARKS

Hip-hop is now old enough to accommodate second acts for rappers, some of whom are eclipsing their estimable first acts. The Wu-Tang Clan member Ghostface Killah recently experienced one of his biggest first-week sales ever for his album "Fishscale"; the Houston veteran Scarface, nearly twenty years into his career, plans to release an album later this year that will likely capitalize on his town's trendy status and his own considerable reputation; and the Bay Area rapper E-40, having already made history by inventing the "izzle" suffix that Snoop Dogg turned into mainstream slang, is at the forefront of "hyphy," a style that didn't even exist when he began rapping, fifteen years ago.

E-40's new album, **"My Ghetto Report Card"** (Reprise/BME), serves as an introduction to the world of hyphy, which involves the use of bouncy, brisk synthesizer music, the wearing of ridiculous oversized sunglasses, and the practice of extremely slow (and somewhat dangerous) driving known as "ghost riding." Long before hyphy's idiosyncrasies became a trend, E-40's music was full of tics and tendencies that you couldn't find anywhere else. He over-enunciates each word until it sounds like he is making fun of the act of rapping itself. E-40's subject matter is status quo for 2006 hip-hop (though it was also his status quo in 1996)—finding money beyond the margins of the law, engaging in unromantic sexual liaisons, and generally affirming E-40 and the "Yay Area" ("yay" is also slang for cocaine). E-40's voice has always been his strong point, and he worked on several tracks here with a local producer named Rick Rock, who can make sounds squelchy and odd enough to match him. "Go Hard or Go Home" is a collaboration between E-40, Rock, and the best young act in the hyphy scene, the Federation, as well as the kind of surprising gift that seems to be coming from this direction every few weeks. (The Federation's "18 Dummy" is Christmas all by itself: an electronically noisy, spring-heeled song that charges ahead unworried that it doesn't make any sense.) "Go Hard" winds around a wonderfully menacing weave of keyboard lines, some nonsense background vocals, and tough, wry lyrics. "From the roota to the toota, he's the driver, I'm the shoota / Don't be fuckin' with my Gouda / Gadgets, iPods, trill phones, Sidekicks, and ring tones / Go hard or go home."

—Sasha Frere-Jones

Meerapfel). ♦ "Cinéfondation, Cannes 2005." April 28 at 8:30, April 29 at 6, and April 30 at 2: The five prize-winning short films. ♦ Films of Duke Ellington by Gary Keys. April 29 at 3: "Mexican Suite" (1980). ♦ April 29 at 4:30: "Memories of Duke" (1980). ♦ April 29 at 7: "An Elegant Ellington Party" (2005), preceded by a live performance by Victor Jones's Ellington All Stars. ♦ Through May 22: "In Memoriam: Nam June Paik." May 1 at 8: Program one, including "TV Cello Premiere" (1971).

MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE

35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—"Independence World Cinema Showcase." April 28 at 7:30: "The Yacoubian Building" (2006, Marwan Hamed; in Arabic). ♦ Through June 8: "American Maverick: A Robert Altman Retrospective." April 29 at 2: "Kansas City" (1996), followed by a discussion with Altman, moderated by David Schwartz. ♦ April 29 at 5: "Robert Altman's Jazz '34" (1996). ♦ April 29-30 at 6:30: "M*A*S*H" (1969). ♦ April 30 at 2: "Brewster McCloud" (1970). ♦ April 30 at 4: "California Split" (1974).

PIONEER THEATRE

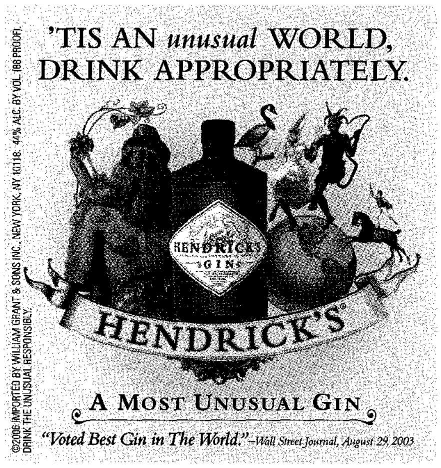
155 E. 3rd St. (212-591-0434)—Special screenings. April 26-27 at 4:30: "In Her Line of Fire" (2006, Brian Trenchard-Smith). ♦ April 27 at 7: "Independent America" (2005, Hanson Hosein). ♦ April 28 at 7: Short-documentary program. ♦ April 28 at 11: "New York Doll" (2005, Greg Whiteley). ♦ April 29 at 7:15: "The Evil Dead" (1981, Sam Raimi). ♦ April 29 at 10:45: "Coachella," music performance on film (2006). ♦ April 30 at 3: "City of God" (2002, Fernando Meirelles and Kátia Lund; in Portuguese). ♦ "Comedy Fortnight."

TRIBECA FILM FESTIVAL

Through May 7. Films will be screened at diverse locations throughout Manhattan. For information, go to www.tribecafilmfestival.org. Selected screenings. April 26 at 3:15: "Sounds of Silence" (2006, Amir Hamz and Mark Lazarz; in Farsi). ♦ April 27 at 6, April 29 at noon, and May 1 at 7: "Toots" (2006, Kristi Jacobson). ♦ April 27 at 9, April 28 at 5, and May 2 at 4: "The Bridge" (2006, Eric Steel). ♦ April 28 at 8, April 30 at 3:15, and May 1 at 4:15: "Brasília 18%" (†). ♦ April 28 at 9, April 30 at 1, and May 2 at 3:30: "The Treatment" (2006, Oren Rudavsky). ♦ April 29 at 6 and May 1 at 6: "My Dad Is 100 Years Old" (†) and "The Flowers of St. Francis" (†). ♦ April 29 at 8:15 and May 1 at 6:30: "Two Players from the Bench" (2005, Dejan Šorak; in Serbo-Croatian). ♦ April 29 at 8:30 and May 1 at 2:30: "Just Like the Son" (2006, Morgan J. Freeman). ♦ May 1 at 6 and May 2 at noon: "Windows" (2006, Shoja Azari). ♦ May 2 at 7: "The Comedy of Power" (2006, Claude Chabrol; in French).

WALTER READE THEATRE

Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—New York African Film Festival. For further information, go to www.africanfilmny.org. Selected screenings. April 26 at 6:30 and April 30 at 6:30: "U-Carmen eKhayelitsha" (2005, Mark Dornford-May; in English and Xhosa). ♦ April 27 at 1 and April 28 at 9:45: "Quartier Mozart" (1992, Jean-Pierre Bekolo; in French). ♦ April 27 at 5:45 and April 30 at 2:15: "All About Darfur" (2005, Taghreed Elsanhouri; in Arabic). ♦ April 28 at 3:30: "Don't F*** with Me, I Have 51 Brothers and Sisters" (2004, Du-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misani Phakathi; in English and Zulu). ♦ April 28 at 7:45 and May 2 at 3: "Les Saignantes" (2005, Bekolo; in French). ♦ April 29 at 7:30 and May 1 at 7: "Drum" (2004, Zola Maseko; in English, Afrikaans, and German). ♦ May 1 at 9:15: "Aristotle's Plot" (1996, Bekolo; in English and French).

READINGS AND TALKS

PEN WORLD VOICES FESTIVAL
This year's gathering continues through the end of the month, with more than a hundred and thirty writers from forty-one countries participating. Highlights include an examination of the notion of revolution, in honor of the anniversaries of the Spanish Civil War, the Hungarian uprising of 1956, and other radical moments, with Gioconda Belli, Baltasar Garzón, Adam Michnik, and G. M. Tamás (New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St. April 28 at 8); a discussion about dual citizenship, with Elias Khoury, Azhar Abidi, Milton Hatoum, André Aciman, and other writers (King Juan Carlos I Spain Center, New York University, 53 Washington Sq. S. April 29 at 8); and the first United States appearance by the Vietnamese author Duong Thu Huong, who will talk with the novelist Robert Stone. (New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St. April 30 at noon.) (For more information about the festival, visit www.pen.org.)

SMALL SPIRAL NOTEBOOK
The local literary journal celebrates its fifth anniversary with readings by Elissa Schappell, Todd Zuniga, Joshua Mandelbaum, and other contributors. (Happy Ending Lounge, 302 Broome St. Tickets at the door. April 27 at 7.)

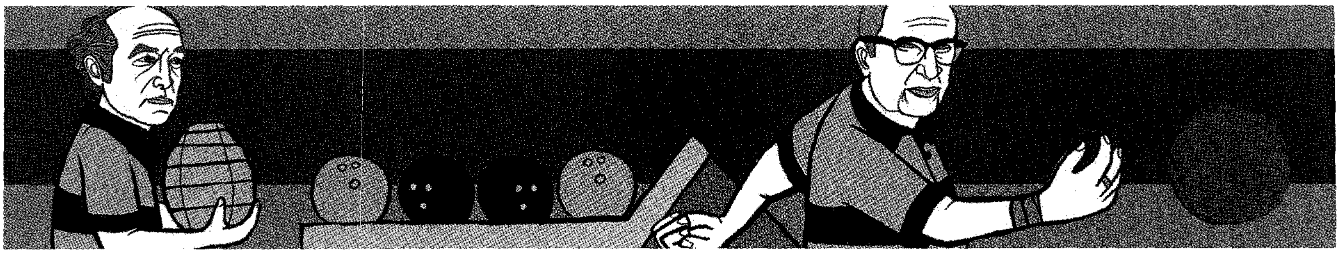
SEAN WILSEY
The author reads from his memoir, "Oh the Glory of It All," which was recently issued in paperback. (Barnes & Noble, 267 Seventh Ave., Park Slope, Brooklyn. April 27 at 7:30.)

"COMEDIES OF FAIR USE"
A three-day conference about the state of copyright law today, with Lawrence Lessig, a law professor at Stanford University, Robert Boynton, a journalism teacher at New York University, the illustrator Art Spiegelman, the filmmaker Errol Morris, the novelist Jonathan Lethem, and other concerned parties. (Hemmerdinger Hall, New York University, 100 Washington Sq. E. April 28-30. For more information, call the New York Institute for the Humanities, at 212-998-2100.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

UPPER WEST FEST
The brownstones and apartment buildings sandwiched between the Hudson River and Central Park might never be known as a center for avant-garde arts, but this new festival makes it clear that the neighborhood is home to more than just baby strollers, doormen, and Zabar's (the festival's sponsor). The Upper West Side, of course, also has Lincoln Center, Symphony Space, the American Museum of Natural History, and the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, a perpetual work in progress that is as much a performance space as a house of worship. This festival, which runs April 28-May 14, features a slew of dance, theatre, music, and literary events at more than a dozen venues. (For a complete schedule, visit www.upperwestfest.com.)

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES
Sotheby's three-part Russian-art sale (April 26 and April 28) reveals the strong links between French and Russian art at the beginning of the twentieth century. The Parisian education of Petr Petrovich Konchalovsky, for example, is evident in his "Olive Grove" (the sale's top lot), with its intense blues, pinks, and deep greens. An imposing portrait of the Grand Duchess Maria Pavlovna the Elder, by Boris Mikhailovich Kustodiev, impresses with its depiction of the duchess's enormous jewels (by Cartier), which were spirited out of Russia by a British spy after the Revolution. May 2 brings an extremely rare find—a series of nineteen drawings in pen and ink, overlaid with watercolors, by William Blake, depicting the soul's progress after death—which will be broken up into separate lots and sold individually, to the chagrin of many Blake lovers. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.) ♦ Anyone in the market for candelabras, silver-gilt dinner services, or a tea equipage (complete with tea caddy, sugar urn, and tortoiseshell case) need look no further than **Christie's** sale of silver and works of virtu (April 26), which is followed by a two-day sale of prints and multiples (May 1-2) featuring works by Warhol, Picasso, Jasper Johns, and Chuck Close. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.) ♦ A Surrealist Rayograph by Man Ray, suggesting infinity as well as the unconscious, is one of the highlights of **Phillips's** auction of photographs on April 26, which also includes images of a priest in bondage (by Andres Serrano), two young Parisian butchers (by Irving Penn), and the expressive hands of a Mexican puppeteer (by Tina Modotti). (450 W. 15th St. 212-940-1200.)



A show about R. Buckminster Fuller and Isamu Noguchi, at the Noguchi Museum.

JASON GREENBERG

ON THE HORIZON

CLASSICAL MUSIC
PAPE POWER
May 12, 15, and 18

René Pape, the mesmerizing young German bass, returns to the role of Gurnemanz in the Met's "Parsifal," sharing the stage with such singers as Ben Heppner, Thomas Hampson, and Waltraud Meier. (212-362-6000.)

MOVIES
RESTORATION DRAMA
May 19-June 21

The cinema may be eternal, but film is a fragile medium. MOMA, working with the International Federation of Film Archives, presents a month of recently restored prints of such classic movies as Otto Preminger's frenetic 1965 mystery, "Bunny Lake Is Missing"; Jacques Feyder's 1923 melodrama, "Crainquebille," shot on location in Paris; and "People on Sunday," a 1929 German romance from a script by Billy Wilder. (212-708-9480.)

ART
BROTHERS IN ART
May 19-Oct. 25

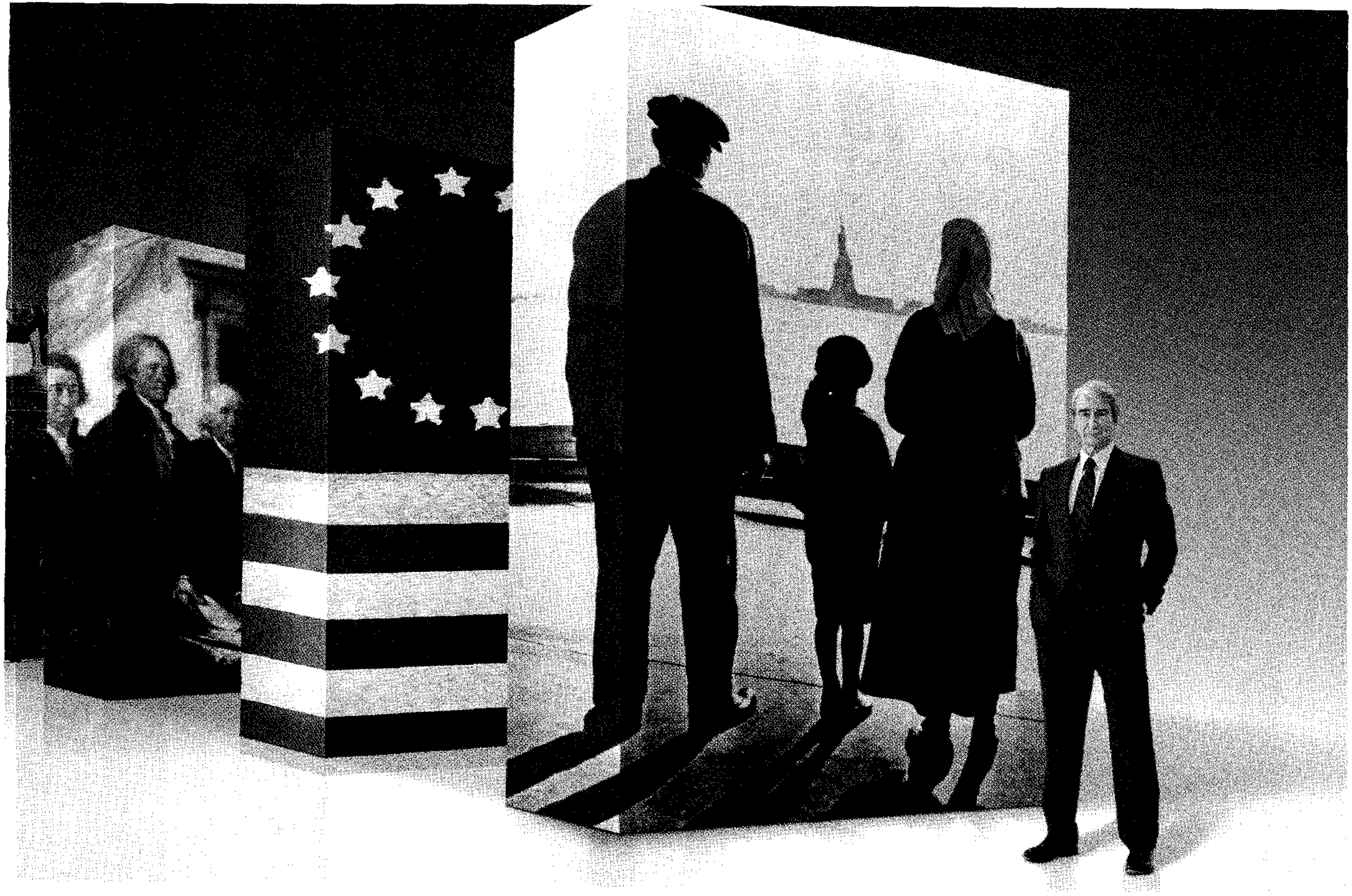
"Best of Friends: R. Buckminster Fuller and Isamu Noguchi," at the Noguchi Museum, in Queens, will chronicle the exchange of ideas and affection between the utopian polymath and the Japanese-American sculptor, who collaborated on projects like the three-wheeled Dymaxion car. (718-204-7088.)

THE THEATRE
LAKE VIEW
May 23

Second Stage Theatre, whose recent hit satire "Little Dog Laughed" will soon head to Broadway, concludes its season with "The Water's Edge," a new play by Theresa Rebeck. Kate Burton, Tony Goldwyn, and Mamie Gummer star in this drama, about a woman whose ex-husband pays an unwelcome visit to her and her children. (212-246-4422.)

NIGHT LIFE
IN THE BASEMENT
May 26-28

Howard Fishman, a gravelly-voiced singer and guitarist adept at delivering small-group swing as well as indie rock, turns to the work of Bob Dylan. He'll play the sixty-odd songs from the recording sessions known as the Basement Tapes, at Joe's Pub. (212-239-6200.)



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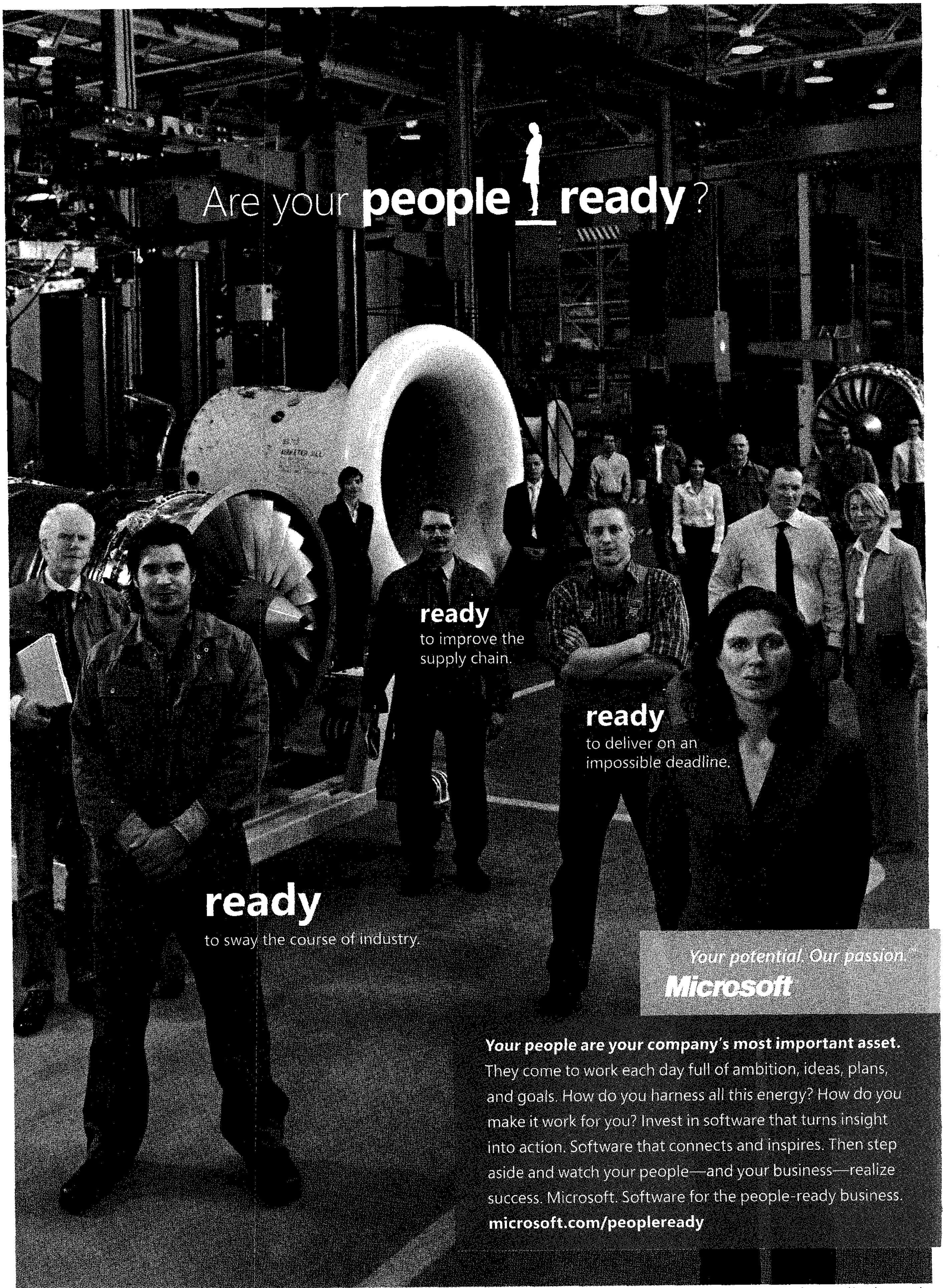
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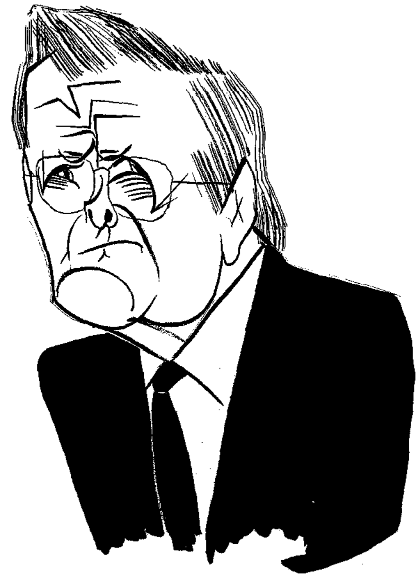
THE
NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
RUMMYACHE

In the ongoing South Americanization of political culture north of the border—a drawn-out historical journey whose markers include fiscal recklessness, an accelerating wealth gap between the rich and the rest, corruption masked by populist rhetoric, a frank official embrace of the techniques of "dirty war," and, by way of initiating the present era, a judicial *autogolpe* installing a dynastic *presidente*—what has been dubbed the Revolt of the Generals is one of the feebler effusions. But it is striking all the same. By last week, the junta had swelled to six members: General Anthony C. Zinni, of the Marine Corps (four stars); Lieutenant General Gregory Newbold, also of the Marines (three stars); and Major Generals John Batiste, Paul D. Eaton, John Riggs, and Charles H. Swannack, Jr., of the Army (two stars). Some reckon that Wesley Clark (Army, four stars), William E. Odom (ditto, three stars), and Bernard E. Trainor (Marines, three stars) are entitled to spots as auxiliary members. All these generals have said devastating things about the job performance of the current Secretary of Defense, particularly with respect to the Iraq war. Their critiques vary—some of them see the war as a series of tactical blunders, others as a strategic disaster doomed from the start—but on one point the Pentagon Six are unanimous: Please. Bring us the head of Donald Rumsfeld.

This brass band of clarion calls for Rumsfeld's resignation or dismissal has occasioned a certain amount of handwringing about alleged threats to the constitutional principle of civilian control of the military. But, as military coups go, this one is pretty weak tea by hemispheric standards. Instead of seizing the radio stations and the Presidential Palace, our disgruntled generals are content to overrun the op-ed pages, the bookstore signing tables, and the greenrooms of the cable-TV news talk shows. Also (and this is not a small point), the generals in question, however youthful and vigorous some of them may appear, are retired. They are no longer links in the chain of command; not being subordinate, they can't be insubordinate. They are civilians. And they are every bit as entitled to express their views publicly, and to give their former civilian superiors a hard time in the process, as were Andrew Jackson in 1824, and Dwight Eisenhower in 1952—not to mention the nine other ex-generals who became President, beginning with General George Washington (ret.), in 1789.



There's nothing new, let alone unconstitutional, about the bitching of pensioned-off generals. What is unusual—unprecedented, apparently—is for so many to speak out so strongly against a prominent architect of an ongoing war and to demand his removal. But then it is also unusual (though not, alas, unprecedented) for the United States to fight a war of choice on the basis of ideological fervor and faulty or falsified intelligence. And it is not just unusual but unprecedented for the stated primary aims of such a war (in this case, to prevent Iraq from obtaining weapons of mass destruction and from aiding terrorist attacks on the American homeland) to have been achieved before a shot was fired, forcing the war's advocates to scramble for new ones.

The generals' revolt of 2006 has resonated. One reason, no doubt, is that the experience of these particular generals suggests that they know what they

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

are talking about. Three of the six—Batiste, Eaton, and Swannack—held positions of command in Iraq; a fourth, Zinni, is steeped in the region, having served as chief of the U.S. Central Command and as President Bush's own special envoy to the Middle East. A second reason is their relative immunity to assaults of the kind that right-wing publicists and talk-radio hosts routinely launch at the patriotism and integrity of Iraq-war critics. One or two bemedalled warriors can be taken down that way; a dense pack is not so easily Swift-boated.

If the generals have struck a chord, a third reason, surely, is a widespread public hunger for some sort of accountability. The White House dimly understands this; hence last week's highly touted "shake-up," which saw the departure of the President's hapless press secretary and the lateral transfer of Karl Rove from deputy chief of staff for policy to just plain deputy chief of staff. These moves, though, are entirely beside the point. If Bush were serious about stanching the hemorrhage of public support for any kind of American role in Iraq, then Rumsfeld's exit—a step that has been suggested not only by generals and Democrats but also by conservative hawks like George Will, Max Boot, David Brooks, and Bill Kristol—would be the obvious beginning. The President's response has been an adamant refusal. "I'm the decider," he said last Tuesday. "And I decide what is best. And what's best is for Don Rumsfeld to remain as the Secretary of Defense."

His reasons for this decision are obscure, a matter for speculation—wild speculation, as he might phrase it. "We had an accountability moment," Bush said a few days before his second Inaugural, "and that's called the 2004 election." Perhaps he thinks that that was the last such moment he owes the country; perhaps dumping Rumsfeld would feel too much like another one. Perhaps his attachment to Rumsfeld—whom the elder President Bush is known to dislike—has something to do with the younger's need for substitute fathers. Perhaps he is simply afraid to lose him, for reasons he understands no better than the rest of us. A couple of weeks ago, answering a question from a student after giving a speech at Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies, Bush provided a hint of the emotional texture of his extraordinary dependence on his Secretary of Defense. "My question," the young woman said,

> is in regards to private military contractors. The Uniform Code of Military Justice does not apply to these contractors in Iraq. I asked your Secretary of Defense a couple months ago what law governs their actions.
>
> THE PRESIDENT: I was going to ask him. Go ahead. (*Laughter*) Help. (*Laughter*)
>
> Q: I was hoping your answer might be a little more specific. (*Laughter*) Mr. Rumsfeld answered that Iraq has its own domestic laws, which he assumed applied to those private military contractors. However, Iraq is clearly not currently capable of enforcing its laws. . . . Mr. President, how do you propose to bring private military contractors under a system of law?
>
> THE PRESIDENT: I appreciate that very much. I wasn't kidding. (*Laughter*) I was going to—I pick up the phone and say, Mr. Secretary, I've got an interesting question. (*Laughter*) This is what delegation—I don't mean to be dodging the question, although it's kind of convenient in this case, but never— (*laughter*). I really will—I'm going to call the Secretary and say you brought up a very valid question, and what are we doing about it? That's how I work. I'm—thanks. (*Laughter*)

Thanks? No. No, thanks. (And no laughter.) He's the decider, and there's the rub.

—*Hendrik Hertzberg*

NOT IN KANSAS
THE LAND OF TURKMENBASHI

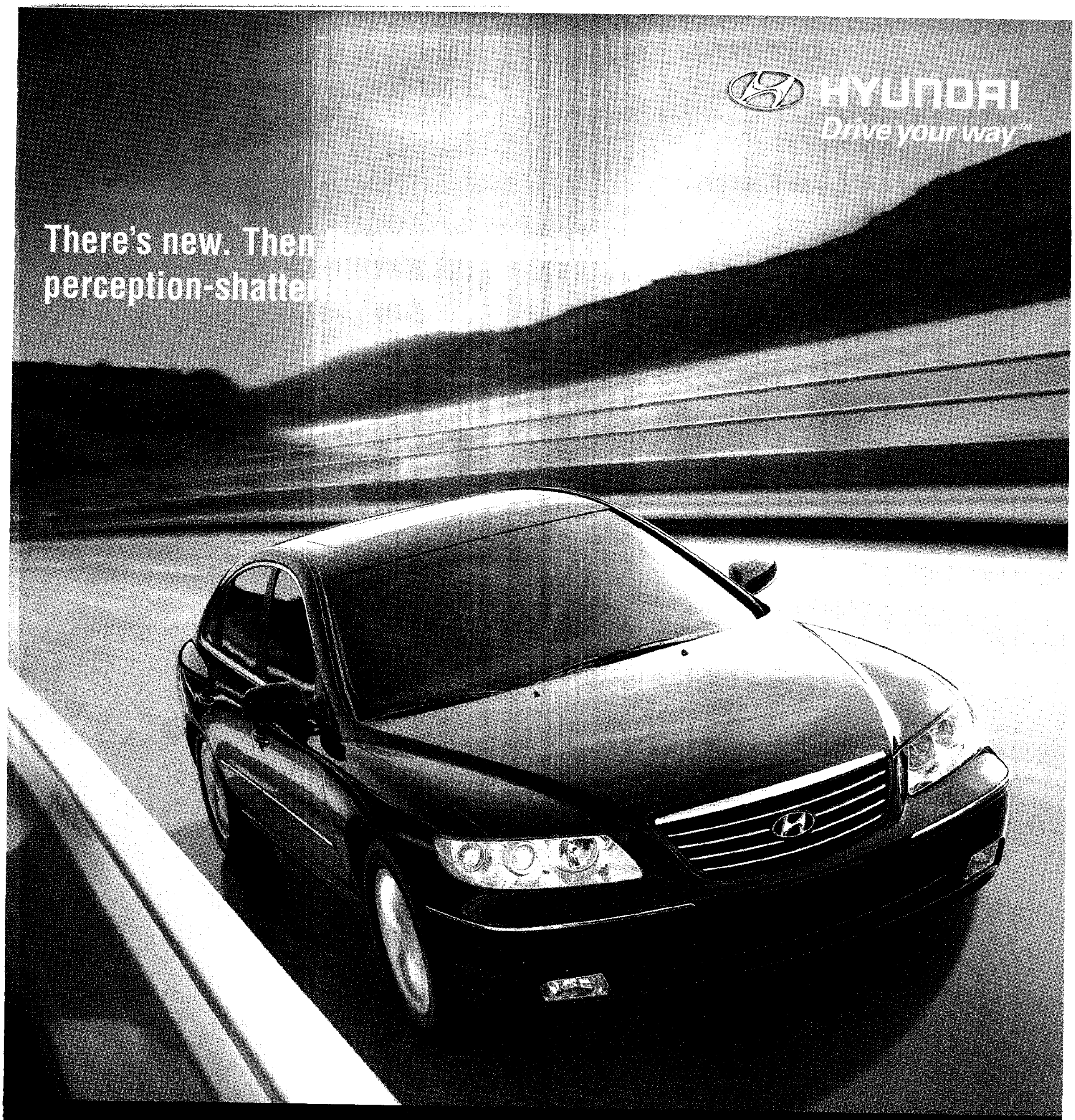
Of the fifteen states of the former Soviet empire, Turkmenistan, just north of Iran, is the one that has turned out to be a cruel blend of Kim Jong Il's North Korea and L. Frank Baum's Oz. Not long after the Soviet collapse, in 1991, a former Communist Party hack named Saparmurat Niyazov became President-for-life, dubbed himself Turkmenbashi—Leader of All the Turkmen—and commenced building the strangest, most tragicomic cult of personality on the Eurasian landmass. Doctors there now take an oath not to Hippocrates but to Turkmenbashi; the month of January is now called Turkmenbashi; and in the capital, Ashgabat, there is, atop the Arch of Neutrality, a two-hundred-and-fifty-foot gold statue of Turkmenbashi that, like George Hamilton, automatically rotates to face the sun.

It is extremely difficult to get a visa. Journalists can visit only rarely. But imagine a society in which the ubiquitous, inescapable leader's image (on the currency, on billboards, on television screens night and day) is that of a saturnine frump who resembles Ernest Borgnine somewhere between "Marty" and "McHale's Navy."

Niyazov is a leader of whims. He has banned opera, ballet, beards, long hair, makeup (for television anchors), and gold-capped teeth. He demands that drivers pass a "morality test." At his command, the word for "April" became *Gurbansoltan eje*, the name of his late mother. Evidently, he prizes fruit: there is now a national holiday commemorating local melons. And, as if the shade of Orwell were not sufficiently present in Turkmenistan, Niyazov has established, despite an abysmal human-rights record, a Ministry of Fairness.

Rahim Esenov, a veteran of the Second World War, is unlucky enough to be a novelist and journalist under the reign of Turkmenbashi, and in February, 2004, he was placed under house arrest by the Turkmen security police. He was accused of smuggling eight hundred copies of his novel "The Crowned Wanderer" from Moscow to his apartment in Ashgabat. When the novel, which is set in the Mogul era, was first published, in 1997, Niyazov denounced Esenov for "historical errors." After suffering a second heart attack, Esenov, who is seventy-nine, was taken to the hospital, but three days later he was removed for interrogation. The security police charged him with "inciting social, national, and religious hatred." And Esenov had undoubtedly given further offense to the regime by sending periodic reports to the U.S.-funded Radio Liberty.

Esenov had every reason to believe that, like so many other members of the Turkmen intelligentsia, he would suffer for a long time. But when PEN American Center, the writers' organization, sent word, through the American Embassy in Ashgabad, that Esenov had won its Freedom to Write Award and invited him to its annual dinner in New York, the regime, sensing an international scan-



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dal, relented and let him go. A day after leaving Turkmen airspace, Esenov found himself in the most surreal of all New York venues—under the ninety-four-foot-long blue whale in the Museum of Natural History's Milstein Hall of Ocean Life—where more than six hundred formally garbed members of PEN rose to cheer him.

"The night was tumultuous for me," Esenov said, a couple of days later. "When they all got up to applaud, well, I couldn't get any words out for a minute. I was so moved. Then, after I spoke, they rose and applauded again. No one in my country gets that kind of treatment except—maybe a dictator!"

Esenov laughed and reached into his coat pocket to pull out a tiny bottle of pills bearing a label from a Turkmen pharmacy.

"I've had two heart attacks lately," he said. "I carry around these nitroglycerin pills. But since the award I haven't had to take one!"

As a young man during the Stalin era, Esenov joined the Communist Party and worked as a reporter for *Pravda.* "I can't describe to you how cut off we were from places like the United States," he said, "except to say that I once had to write some small article and said that Columbia University, which had sent some books to my country, was in Colombia. And no one—not one of the editors—thought it was a mistake. It was as if we were under a veil."

Niyazov, like Mao or Qaddafi, insists on being his people's favorite writer. He is the putative author of the "Ruhnama," a book that is meant to be a spiritual guide, a celebration of the Leader, and a newly contrived history of the Turkmen people. Niyazov has suggested that if one reads the "Ruhnama" one will surely go to Heaven. Other contemporary books, like Esenov's, are generally considered rivals and are banned. For obvious reasons, Esenov was reluctant to speak directly about Niyazov, but about his own novel he said, "In any era, the writer reflects the feelings and protest of the people, and I'm a child of my people. In 'Animal Farm,' the animals are there as an allegory for the people."

Walking near Bryant Park on a perfect spring day, Esenov took time to admire the Public Library, but when someone pointed out the spire of the Empire State Building he squinted vaguely. He had no idea that this tall building was any more distinguished than any other.

"You know, when I got out of jail and was told I was coming here, I thought about leaving the country forever—getting refugee status and living here," he said. "For a while, it was a stubborn thought. But I can't do that. My wife is ill. I have family. I'm too old. It's too late. It's Turkmenistan for me to the end."

Then he got in the back seat of a taxi, and it pulled away. In a few days, Rahim Esenov would return home to the land of Turkmenbashi.

—*David Remnick*

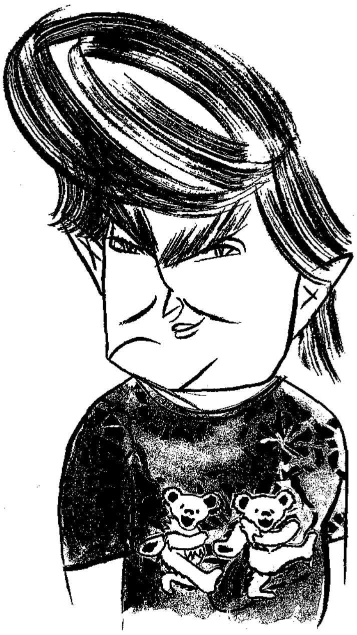
"I couldn't afford health insurance, so I became a Christian Scientist."

WITH THE BAND DEPT.
BLIND DATE

When Bob Weir comes to New York, Billy Procida, a real-estate investor, usually has a dinner for him. Weir is the surviving guitarist of the Grateful Dead, and he now tours with his own band, RatDog. Recently, RatDog played at the Beacon Theatre for three nights. The night before the first concert, Procida, who invests money for some of the musicians, joined the band and a number of investment bankers for dinner at Jovia, on East Sixty-second Street. Dinner is where Donald Trump's name came up. "I'm the boy Trump," Procida often says. "The original apprentice." Procida is forty-two. He grew up in New Jersey. His father was a contractor. When he graduated from high school, Procida built a Mediterranean-style condominium complex called White Beach on a few acres of land along the East River in the Bronx near the Throgs Neck Bridge. He included a marina for the residents' boats and called the project a dockominium. (For a time, he had a twenty-six-foot boat himself, on which he threw parties, but it sank.)

Shortly before Procida began White Beach, he wrote his first letter to Trump, whom he regarded as a hero. He asked for fifteen minutes of his time. He received a form letter in return. He continued to write. He thinks that by the time Trump hired him, in 1990, he had sent about twenty letters. He worked for Trump for a year.

The dinner at Jovia included forty people. "It was bedlam," Procida says. At one point, he was telling his guests about a radio contest he is running in St. Louis, where he is putting up a housing complex. The contest, called The Protégé, is based on "The Apprentice." The winner gets a job with Procida and an apartment in the complex. During the conversation, Procida says, "someone mentions Trump, and, next thing I know, they're voting on it. Bob's not a dictator. Everything is voted, and it's approved: we bring Donald to the RatDog show."



In the morning, Procida called Trump. " 'My schedule's jammed,' Trump tells me. 'I've got to go to Al Sharpton's event at the Sheraton. I don't think I can do it.' " The next evening, shortly before RatDog was to take the stage, Procida's phone rang. "It's Trump," Procida says. "'I can make it,' he tells me. 'But I only got ten minutes.'"

Before a show, Weir gathers the band members in his dressing room to warm up their voices. They were just about to run through the song "Attics of My Life." "Then there was The Donald in the hallway," Weir says. "I haven't seen that much of him, but I knew who it was. He had the suit and the hair." They talked for a few minutes—Trump said that he might like to have Weir on "The Apprentice"—and then it was time for the musicians to perform. The band walked on with Trump, and Weir followed a few feet behind. The audience fell silent. There were some catcalls. "He was walking straight into the teeth of a fairly tough crowd," Weir says. "He's got nerve."

Trump strode to the center of the stage. "I winged it," he says. "I told them, 'I have good news and bad news. The good news is that I'll be speaking to you for a while tonight—I'll be speaking about success and business—and the bad news is that Bob can't be here.'"

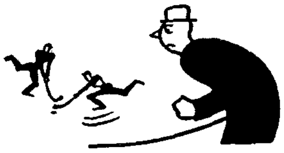
Procida: "He said, 'I'll be taking Bob's place with the band tonight. I'll be singing, maybe do some of my own stuff.' And they went nuts—they all booed. They went crazy."

Trump, looking shiny in the stage lights, smiled and waved and walked offstage. He decided to join the audience and listen for a while. "I tell him, 'Donald, all I got for protection is bankers,'" Procida says. "Fortunately, they're big bankers." In the audience, fans kept approaching Trump and high-fiving him. "Finally, we had to build a wall of bankers around him," Procida says. "He leaves just after the first set ends. His tie's undone and hanging off to the side. In all the years, I never saw him that way."

"I had a great time," Trump said later. "But I had to get home. I just had a baby, you know."

—*Alec Wilkinson*

ON THE ICE
THE SHADOW KNOWS



The Czechs coined a couple of words, eight or so decades ago, that might be of some use to anyone eager to take in a hockey game this week, now that the Stanley Cup playoffs are under way. Be advised that you probably will not hear these two words down at the rink, and that uttering them there may provoke funny looks, or worse. One is *svejking*, which has nothing to do with "checking." It derives from the 1923 novel "The Fateful Adventures of the Good Soldier Svejk During the World War," by Jaroslav Hasek, and refers to Svejk's way of behaving witlessly in order to survive the absurdities (as well as the perils) of life as cannon fodder. The other useful word is "robot." The writer Karel Capek introduced it in 1920, in his play "R.U.R.," and it comes from the Czech word *robota*, meaning "compulsory labor, drudgery, servitude."

These terms pertain because Jaromir Jagr, the best hockey player in the world, is Czech. He plays for the New York Rangers, who have six other Czech players, and who, having qualified for the playoffs for the first time in nine years, are in the midst of a first-round series against the New Jersey Devils. The Rangers' success has depended all year, and will continue to depend, on Jagr. He is very big and very skilled—sometimes unstoppable. Opposing teams often assign a player to follow him around the ice, in an effort to hamper him and diminish his effect on the game. This player is known as a shadow.

On the ice, Jagr is neither a *svejker* nor a robot, at least in the old *robota* sense, but his shadow has to be a little of both. Jagr has a long reach and a huge rump—a hockey butt's hockey butt—which enable him to get around and/or fend off would-be defenders. "He just backs his way to the net," the former Ranger Brian Leetch said recently, in the *Times*. "And he's too strong, with the new rules, for anybody to be able to do anything legally to stop it." (By "new rules" Leetch meant a season-long crackdown on the hooking and holding tactics that defenders used to rely upon.) And so the shadow must accept that, like the soldier Svejk, he will suffer humiliation and abuse—that the notion of defending Jagr is on some level absurd. As for the robot element, the shadow must become, as a dictionary might say, a device that automatically performs complicated, often repetitive tasks. For example, he must jump on the ice whenever Jagr is out there, smother him as soon as the puck comes to him, and occasionally—surreptitiously—stick a stick between his legs. (As Peter Pan commands his shadow, when he attempts to reunite with it, "Stick! Stick!")

In the opinion of Glen Sather, the general manager of the Rangers, the wiliest shadow of them all was a Finn named Esa Tikkanen, who played for the Rangers and the Edmonton Oilers, among others, in the eighties and nineties. Tikk, as he was known, was more *svejker* than robot, a mischief-maker and provocateur, adept with a glove to the face, a stick to the loins, or a blown kiss in a scrum. He was also a peerless yapper, taunting opponents in Tikkanese, an unintelligible mishmash of Swedish, Finnish, and English. The best shadows do more than stick; they burrow in.

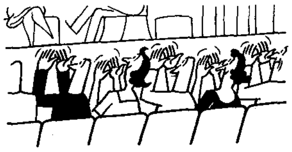
"I never tried to call a person things or do any bad words," Tikkanen said last week. He was at home in Helsinki, watching over his one-year-old son, Enzo, who was running around the house, hockey stick in hand. "I just asked the guys how's your mom doing, how's your wife doing, how're the kids doing." The reaction, he said, depended on how such people were actually doing, and sometimes he knew they weren't doing so well.

"In Finnish a shadow is *varjo*," he said. "But when you follow someone it is *seurailija*. I had so many players. First, there was Wayne Gretzky. After that, I have Mario Lemieux, I have Brett Hull, I have Steve Yzerman. Being their shadow was a privilege."

The shadow in Madison Square Garden this week, the Devil pulling Jagr duty, is a mucker from Massachusetts named Jay Pandolfo, an esteemed but more robot-oriented member of the brotherhood. Tikkanen's advice for Pandolfo was mild. "You have to be close enough to never let the puck get to him," he said. "If you played our old-time hockey, you'd just put a stick between the legs." Pandolfo, meanwhile, was down at the rink, promising to keep his head on a swivel. That's shadow talk—not Czech or Tikkanese—for keeping an eye on your guy.

—*Nick Paumgarten*

DO-OVER DEPT.
VAMPIRES IN TIGHTS



Bernie Taupin, the lyricist and longtime collaborator of Elton John, emerged from the spectral gloom of the Palace Theatre the other day, slipped on a pair of dark glasses, and crossed the street to a restaurant in the W Hotel. He was taking a break from working on the revisions to "Lestat," a John-Taupin musical based on Anne Rice's "Vampire Chronicles," which is opening this week on Broadway. "It's the show that et my life," he said wearily. After three years of writing, casting, and rehearsing, "Lestat" had a Christmastime tryout in San Francisco, where, by almost unanimous critical consensus, it was a disaster. Taupin and his co-creators plunged into elaborate revisions, reworking eighty per cent of the show over the following two months. "We've still got a lot to do, but I think it's finally coming together," Taupin said. His eyebrows shot up skeptically, as if they didn't quite believe him.

The project began simply enough. Early in 2003, Taupin spent three days in Las Vegas with Robert Jess Roth, the show's director, and Linda Woolverton, its writer, outlining the story and blocking out the songs. Their watchword was "no dancing vampires," Taupin said, adding that the intention was to make the show "philosophical and dark." That feeling is present right from the start, when, after a truncated overture, the action is punctuated by repeated earsplitting cries of "*Wolfkiller! Wolfkiller!*" "Is the wolf evil because it hunts the hare or is that just the circle of life?" Taupin went on. "That's the simplicity of the show."

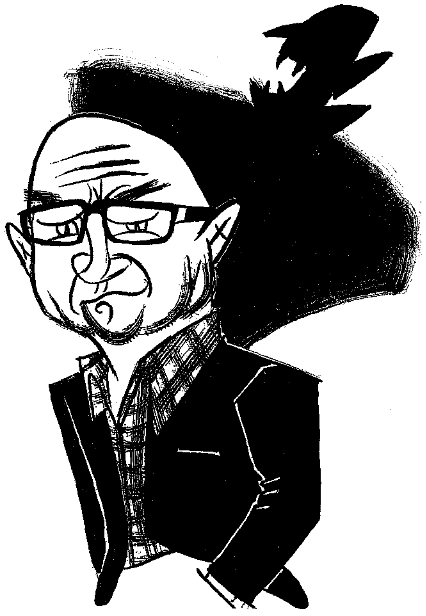
Taupin, who is fifty-five, looks like a sensitive, balding cowboy. He was wearing a bright Western shirt and a suède jacket. He said that after the Vegas summit meeting he went back to his ranch, in the Santa Ynez Valley, north of Santa Barbara, to work on the songs. Taupin grew up in northern England, on a farm that his father managed, and he now raises and trains cutting horses. When the lyrics were finished, he took them to Elton John, who was at home in Atlanta. John composed the score in a feverish two-week burst. ("I was sucked dry," he told the *Telegraph*.) "But a lot of the early songs were beheaded," Taupin said, as the material was tweaked to make it work onstage.

"Rewriting has been incredibly exhausting," he went on. "I spent far more time on these songs than on anything else I've done." The classic Taupin rock lyrics ("Daniel," "Rocket Man") are made up of bundles of rhythmic narrative pictures, loosely gathered around a central character. They sound like stories—"Daniel is travelling tonight on a plane"—but they can mean almost anything you want them to. Taupin had never written songs for the theatre. "It's very different from writing your standard three-minute rock bash," he said. "In theatre, you have to be very specific about your information, and the song has to advance the story and be in the character of the singer." The most memorable song in "Lestat" is called "I Want More," and it is sung by seventeen-year-old Allison Fischer, to the two lead vampires, whom she blames for making her one of them:

> Did I rock the family boat
> By dining on the help?
> Aren't I just the little beast?
> Well, I can't stop myself.

Cute, but not exactly "Tiny Dancer."

Taupin ordered a cup of camomile tea. He said that he missed his ranch. "I can't wait to get back on a horse," he said. He recently married again, and he and his wife have a ten-month-old daughter named Charley Indiana.



Bernie Taupin

It was time to get back to the theatre for the afternoon rehearsal. Taupin had written a new refrain for a song that Lestat sings after biting his boyhood friend Nicolas. Perhaps they were just rearranging deck chairs on the Titanic—at this point, dancing vampires might be the only thing left to try—but Taupin was optimistic. He still wasn't sure about having the über-vampire Marius appear throughout the show dressed as the Dalai Lama, but he was sticking to his guns about not wanting a big closing number. "It's just not a feel-good show," he said.

—*John Seabrook*

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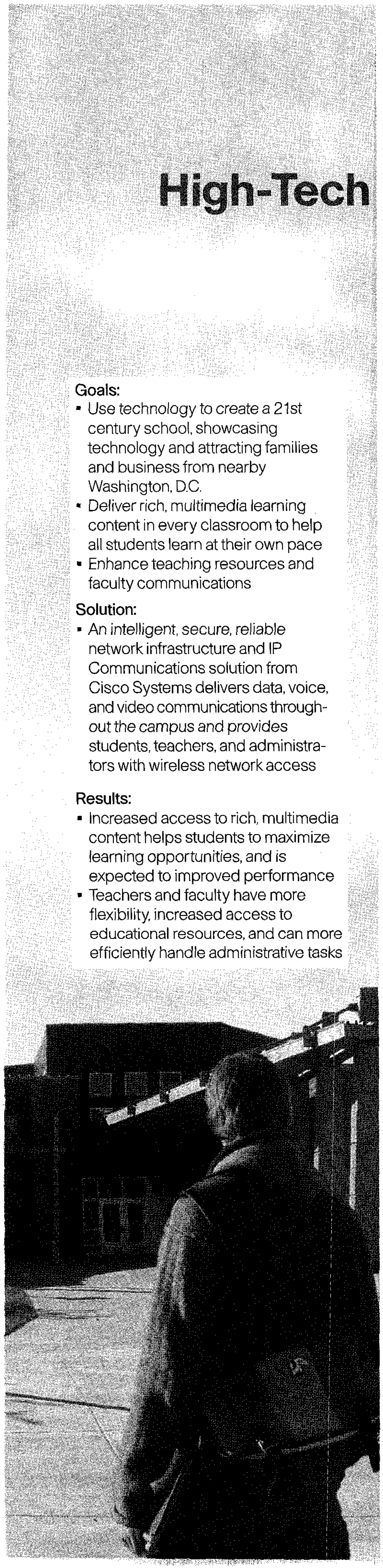


NOTES OF A GASTRONOME

CARNAL KNOWLEDGE

How I became a Tuscan butcher.

BY BILL BUFORD

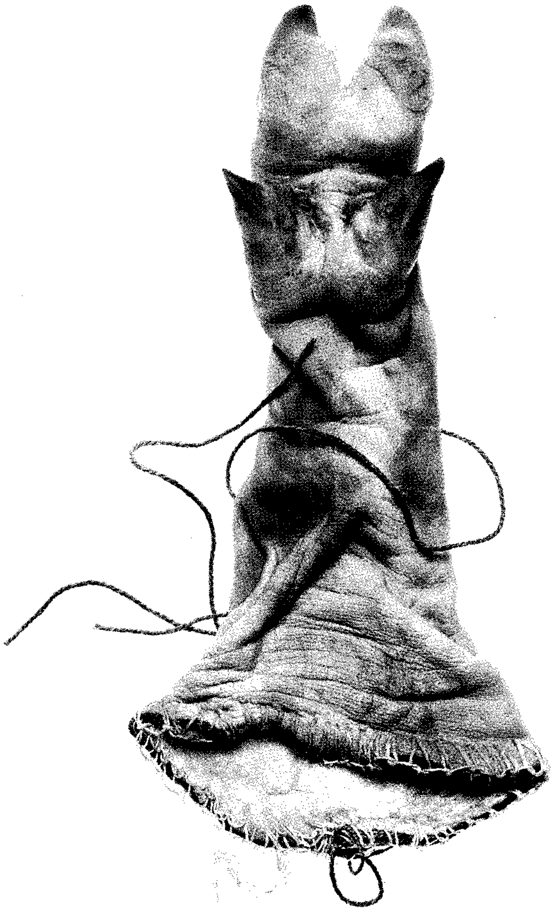
I wanted a pig.

My friend Paul sold pigs. He owned Violet Hill Farm and had a Saturday stand at the Greenmarket on Union Square. But Paul had only sucklings. I'd returned from Italy and didn't want a suckling. I wanted a proper pig, a big one. Could Paul get me a big pig?

Well, yes, he probably could. His neighbor had sows, and if I ordered one before it was slaughtered it wouldn't have to be inspected by the Department of Agriculture. This, Paul said, was a good thing. In effect, he explained, I'd be buying a living animal—"Think of it as a pet"—rather than a dead one cut up by a butcher. (The rustic logic of animal husbandry is based on a belief that all government agencies are bad, even if they were established to prevent you from getting ill, which you would have thought was good.) But when my wife and I appeared the following Saturday the pig was definitively dead, wrapped in a transparent plastic sheet and flopped across the back seat of Paul's vehicle: a medium-sized animal, about two hundred pounds, with everything on view—hooves, legs, piggy tail, snout—plus, stuffed in the cavity, the lungs, heart, and liver.

The challenge was getting it home. The transparent sheet insured that every passerby knew what I'd bought. It was not your normal parcel of urban shopping. It was not your normal Greenmarket purchase, either, and many people looked at me as though I were a bad man. One woman stood in front of me with her arms across her chest in open disapproval. I was tempted to prop our pig against the organic wheatgrass stand. ("Mind if we leave this here while we get a cup of coffee?")

Cars are not permitted in the Greenmarket, but I had a Vespa. Without it, I wonder what I would have done. Flagged a taxi? I strapped my purchase onto the rack over the front wheel, hooves dangling on either side, a pair of ears just underneath the handlebars, my wife on the back. The three of us, precariously poised, putted home. I parked in front of our building, and, cradling my cargo in my arms, staggered to the door, musing, Is there a law against this?



HANS GISSINGER

The doorman, Gary Miro, welcomed us with the delight of an unapologetic meat-eater, and we stepped into the elevator. But, before we ascended, a problem appeared in the Saturday-morning dress of a Wall Street banker, who had come in behind us.

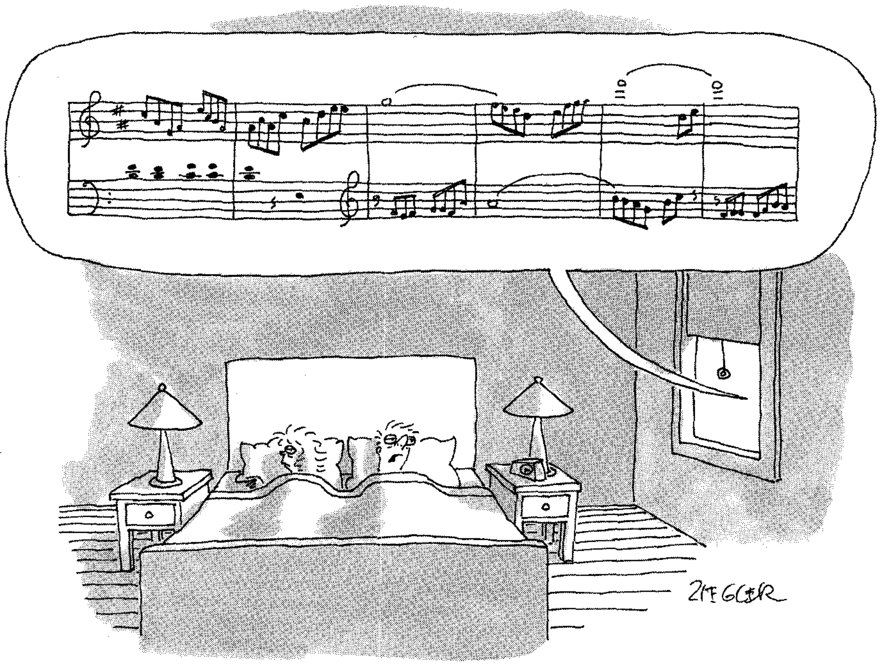
"Gary, do we want another passenger?" I was struggling. Two hundred pounds was akin to a big man. What's more, things had shifted, and blood was pooling up in a crease of the plastic.

It was a summer day in a small elevator: the doorman, the banker, and, just behind, my wife, me, and my pig. The banker turned. I don't know why. Maybe he smelled something, although the smell, as these things go, wasn't bad. He conducted an inventory of the details apparent in the plastic sheet, and when the door opened he exited with considerable dispatch.

"Did you hear the sound he made?" Gary asked with undisguised glee. I had heard it and was distressed. I had been uncomfortable in the Greenmarket. Now I'd made my neighbor sick.

I deposited my pig on the breakfast table. I emptied out the refrigerator and washed down the counters. I sharpened a knife and reflected on the difficulty of a pig at home. I hadn't wanted to upset my neighbor. I didn't know him well but gathered (from the doorman) that he, too, was a meat-eater. My pig was a more elementary form of things he'd been eating for years. The realization confirmed something I'd always suspected: people don't want to know what meat is. They don't think of meat as an animal; they think of it as an element in a meal. ("What I want tonight is a cheeseburger!")

For me, meat wasn't a cause. I just believe people should know what they're eating. At the Greenmarket, you overheard discussions about fertilizers and soils and how much freedom a chicken needs before its eggs are free-range. Wouldn't it follow that you'd want to know your meat? I had brought home a freshly killed animal—better raised than anything I'd find at a store—and, in preparing it, I was hoping to rediscover



"These songbirds every morning at five A.M. would be really annoying if they weren't so damn talented."

• •

old-fashioned ways of making food. This, I felt, could only be positive. But I was sure getting a lot of shit for it.

I'd been in Italy six months, and the idea of buying a pig at the Greenmarket occurred to me when I was there. Most of the people I'd met knew what to do with a pig—or else had a grandmother who knew, or an uncle. It seemed like the next natural step that I should have this kind of knowledge as well.

The commonplace about Italian cooking is that it's very simple; in practice, the simplicity needs to be learned, and the best way to learn it is to go to Italy and see it firsthand. I ended up at a butcher shop. I would have been happy anywhere, but the butcher was the first person to say yes.

The butcher was Dario Cecchini. I'd heard about him from Armandino Batali, the proprietor of Salumi, in Seattle, and the father of Mario, the celebrity chef. The story was that Mario had gone to Italy to learn the simplicity of Italian food, and the experience had changed his life; his father then did the same. Dario's had been one of Armandino's first stops.

I phoned. "Signor Cecchini," I said, "I am a friend of Mario Batali."

"*Accidenti!*" he declared (which seemed to mean something like "Well, I'll be God-damned!" but what did I know?).

"Mario is the son of Armandino," I said, reading from a script. (My Italian was no better than Chapter 18 of "In Italiano," the textbook used at the Scuola Italiana del Greenwich Village.)

"*Accidenti!*"

"And I would like to be a Tuscan butcher."

"*Accidenti! Vieni! Pronto! Ora!*"—Come! Quickly! Now!

One week later, I was in Chianti—Dario's butcher shop was halfway between Florence and Siena, in Panzano—feeling that when my stay was completed I, too, would be a different person, but I had no idea how.

Panzano was small—a hamlet of nine hundred people—but large enough to have two versions of itself: an ancient town and a new one.

The ancient town was a maze of old and imitation-old: remnants of a castle (the archways), a medieval wall, a medieval church (rebuilt in the seventeenth and early twentieth centuries), bad sewage, noisy neighbors, and no privacy—a characteristic feudal fortification built on top of a hill during the long wars between the Sienese and the Florentines, a shelter for the people who worked the land. You could see that land spreading out in a series of basinlike valleys: more giant bathtubs than conventional river-carved ravines. I was surprised by how much was wooded and wild. What was cultivated was mainly grapevines: their proliferation represented the only significant change in the landscape in the past five hundred years. It was the beginning of April, and the vineyards were lines of plowed dark earth, a mathematical map of gnarly black stumps with tight fists of tiny green leaves that would open any day now, like a hand.

The new town was made of stucco. Like many hill towns, Panzano had been occupied by the Nazis, who torched buildings along the main road when they retreated. The conflagration destroyed structures that had been standing for centuries, including the Antica Macelleria Cecchini (the Ancient Cecchini Butcher Shop), which had been in the same spot, run by the firstborn male of the Cecchini family, for eight generations.

My first day of work was gray and windy, and few people were out. But the *macelleria* was in a frenzy. It was a "production day." I would learn this later; then I understood only that I was always having to get out of the way of people moving very quickly. In the front was Dario, standing on a raised platform behind a display case. The day before, a Sunday, when I'd dropped by to say I'd arrived, the shop had been packed with people. There had been loud music and free red wine and plates of creamy white *lardo* (raw pig fat). Dario was a towering figure in his late forties—overdeveloped shoulders, gigantic hands, and monstrous fingers—and very much the master of ceremonies. He had a crewcut, and around his neck wore a pink bandanna that matched the pink in his cotton shirt and his clogs. On seeing me, he stopped what he was doing and started declaiming the Inferno from memory: he crouched low; then he thrust himself upright; he made his eyes big; he made them small; he wagged his finger; he brought his hands together in prayer. It was possibly the most melodramatic performance I'd ever witnessed. The crowd loved it and erupted in uproarious applause. But now Dario was in a silent fury of productivity.

In the back, there was an oven and a butcher block, where an older man worked. He was *il Maestro*, and all exchanges ended with this title. It was: How are you today, Maestro? Would you like a coffee, Maestro? May I remove these scraps, Maestro?

Around eleven, the Maestro had something to eat, which was bread ("the Maestro's loaf," cooked in a wood-burning oven) with olive oil and sprinkled with salt.

May I prepare it for you, Maestro?

May I remove the plate, Maestro?

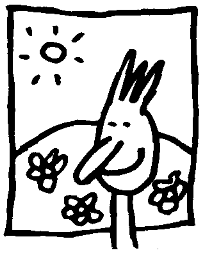
Only two people were allowed to use a butcher knife—Dario and the Maestro. The Maestro was sixty-two, dressed in his own white smock (everyone else was in a medieval floor-length apron), and had silver hair, a thin, expressively lined face, black eyebrows, big ears, and a large masculine nose. "Look at that face," a friend of the Maestro's instructed me some time later, when I'd become comfortable enough in Italian to follow some of the shop banter. "Isn't that the face of an Etruscan? Don't you recognize it from the tomb paintings? It's as old as these hills." The Maestro was deliberate and understated, and spoke with what sometimes seemed like an exaggerated gravitas, gathering his long fingers together like a piece of punctuation. The fingers were enormous. Astonishingly, they were bigger than Dario's. The Maestro's hands were so big they made me uneasy. (Why were mine so small? I'd ask myself, staring at them on my walks home. Maybe to do this job you needed forest animals at the ends of your arms; otherwise, take up pastry.)

The shop was managed by Carlo and Teresa, a husband and wife (formerly Florentine factory owners, making dress shirts for men, until men started wearing T-shirts, and their business went bust), who were, by their own description, living in "reduced circumstances." Carlo tended the accounts. He was fifty-five, with a dark mustache and a dark manner: a hard man with a soft, bruised heart. For the first year after the bankruptcy, Dario told me, Carlo never spoke, not a word. Now he speaks—every few days, he also smiles. The difficulty for me was his accent. Florentine speech is exaggerated. In the Tuscan hills it's an exaggeration of an exaggeration, a spit-spraying fricative howl, more animal than human. Even today, I try not to ask Carlo a question, because I fear I won't understand the reply.

Teresa looked after all the prepared items—jellies, terrines, beans, some sold in packages, some by the ladle. None of it was what you'd expect in a conventional butcher shop. I would learn that most of it was so unusual it wasn't found in any butcher shop.

There were others—Riccardo, looking like a cartoon version of the butcher's apprentice (round and fleshy with rosy cheeks and floppy black hair and seeming fourteen; he was actually twenty-one), and Rashid, who appeared one morning from Morocco without a passport, and Lucia, who washed the aprons, and Miriam, who read the papers for articles about Tuscanness—but the operatic center, the spectacle that people drove miles to see, was Dario.

He was born across the street from the butcher shop, on September 10, 1955, in the house of his father, Tullio. Tullio had been known for his charm, his athleticism, and his winning way with women—a distress to his own father, who, on his deathbed, ordered his son to stop being a ladies' man and settle down. Marry Angelina, he'd commanded, a local girl, whereupon the father died, and Tullio promptly married Angelina. Today, when Dario talks of his father, he invokes a teacher, often of lessons in how to see—an aesthetic appreciation, an understanding of painting, and a proudly possessive view of the Renaissance, inculcated during informal tutorials, father and son at museums together, which went something like this: "You see that statue of David? You see that painting of the Last Supper? They're Tuscan. We did those." What the father did not teach his son was how to prepare meat.



Dario did not want to be a butcher and was resolved to be the first Cecchini in three centuries not to be. He wanted a college education, and studied veterinary science at the University of Pisa. "I wanted to cure animals, not butcher them." In his second year, his sister phoned: their father had cancer. Dario was summoned to a hospital, where his father, dying, confessed to having made a mistake: he had not taught his son how to butcher. "Go to the Maestro. I've spoken to him. He will teach you." Whereupon the father died. And, following the deathbed imperative, Dario abandoned his studies and asked the Maestro for his help, and he agreed to give it.

The village Dario came back to was different from the one he'd grown up in. Only old people remained, he recalls; everyone else was leaving (*fuggendo*—fleeing, as though from a pestilence). His father's customers had been *contadini*, small-plot holders, who did a farming called *agricoltura promiscua*, a promiscuous mix: vines and olive trees, livestock and vegetables. The local cow was a white breed called a Chianina, a work animal, distinguished by its height (it towers over conventional cattle), its size (calves can weigh nearly fifteen hundred pounds), and its strength. The Chianina had been here as long as anyone could remember (*da sempre*, since forever), and you couldn't cultivate the hilly land without them. They were also prized for their deep "beefiness"—a unique, complex flavor that comes from worked muscles, sometimes tough, rarely fatty, like an animal in the wild. The *bistecca fiorentina* is traditionally cut from a Chianina. But mixed farming had been disappearing.

In 1956, a devastating spring freeze—the worst in two centuries—killed most of the olive trees, including ones that, hundreds of years old, had seemed capable of living through every adversity. And the death of the trees, so associated with the area as to be a symbol—one that meant permanence and durability—crushed the spirit of the people who cultivated them. Other freezes followed, severe enough to kill off the new plantings. Farmers wanted out. Many abandoned their homes: who wants a stone house with dirt floors, no plumbing, and ruined vegetation? There were other factors (everyone has a list), including a bungled effort by an interventionist government to help (too little, too late); the advent of supermarkets; the ubiquity of refrigeration, or paved roads, or travel agencies; the culture of electricity (if only that hadn't arrived). In sum (call it "the very late arrival of the twentieth century"), they amounted to the end of a long era in rural Tuscany. Today, the farms are gone; so, too, are the Chianina. For vines, you need a tractor.

One afternoon, I joined Dario at his home, Il Greppo, a stone house like those abandoned by farmers in the seventies. (To reach it, you are carried on up a steep road by the butcher shop, heading into the wild, uncultivated part of Chianti.) Dario's first five years had been lonely. One moment, a student's life: "I'd discovered movies. I had girlfriends, read books, attended gallery openings. From there, to a butcher shop in Panzano. It was like going to Africa." He'd been living in the family home across the street, traversing the same piece of earth ("*la stessa terra!*") his father had walked on: and his grandfather, and his great-grandfather. He was cutting himself. Incompetence or fear? Both, he said—a debilitating terror. His arms were covered with scars. Knives frightened him. "I saw only the blade and kept ruining the beef. I hurt myself terribly." He wanted to do everything quickly, urgently, even though he knew nothing. The Maestro slowed him down. "You can't do traditional work at a modern pace. Traditional work has traditional rhythms. You can be busy, but you must remain calm." Il Greppo was where Dario could be calm.

It was like a neglected museum. Apart from an upper floor—where a bathroom had been installed—the property was largely untouched since its last inhabitants. The ground floor dated from the thirteenth century, most of it taken up by an open-hearth kitchen—a giant source of heat, a place to cook by and be warmed. Dario grew still. "I come here to smell. Sometimes I do nothing but sit in a corner and smell."

I tried to take in the room's musty history, but couldn't stop my mind from recognizing the absurdities of where I found myself: are running water, gas, and electricity really so evil? Even so, scrutinizing the silence, I couldn't deny the room's eerie power. I walked across the hearth—gray ash rubbed into the clay floor—and looked into the bedrooms. They were small, space for a bed, not much more, windows with crisscrossing metalwork. During the hot months, they admitted a breeze and the smells of animals. In the winter, shutters wouldn't have kept out the cold, and everyone would have gathered round the fire. I stood in a doorway, lost in a meditation on the house's diurnal habits. People made love here, sweated through pregnancy, gave birth, nursed children, became ill, died, a fire burning in the kitchen. In this room, the next generation did the same, the fire still burning. And the next generations, for nearly a thousand years.

I began—my Greenmarket pig wetly sprawled across the breakfast table in its floppy entirety—by cutting an arc around the hips to remove the hind legs, the *prosciutti*. In Italian, a *prosciutto* is both limb and preparation, the salt-cured ham you see hanging from deli ceilings. I wasn't going to cure these—a ritualized business traditionally done in January—but do something I regarded as "Dario's summertime pig." Dario learned the recipe from an elderly *contadino*, who had learned it from his father on his deathbed, when the *contadino* was a boy. The father had ordered him to convey the recipe to someone at the Cecchini butcher shop: not Dario, because he wouldn't have been born yet, but most likely Dario's grandfather. The *contadino* wasn't sure why it had taken him so long, apart from his not having a vehicle. But he was happy to have fulfilled his father's wish and passed an old Chianti preparation into the appropriate hands before it disappeared.

You started by breaking the legs down into their major muscles, using your fingers to find "the seams." The Maestro had taken me through the process and created a road map of sorts. The result was a bowl of pork pieces—around a dozen. Next, you brined them by tipping an abundance of salt into a bucket of water and swirling until it half dissolved into a soupy paste. Two days later, you removed the pieces and cooked them slowly in white wine, leaving them to cool overnight before storing them in olive oil in the morning. The pieces, half cured, wine-flavored, and submerged in oil, keep for a year.

The recipe, I now appreciate, was probably devised to clean up problem pork during the hot months. In general, you don't kill pigs in the summer unless they're ill, and Dario once let slip that the *contadino* had used the recipe for his sick pigs—not the kind of information a butcher forthrightly shares with his customers. ("Here, try this, a bit of diseased pork I incinerated.") In the event, what Dario did or didn't say was immaterial, because no one bought it. Who wants fat (pork) in fat (oil)? But the meat was actually lean, with the texture of fish, and in a moment of marketing clarity he renamed it *tonno* (tuna) *del Chianti*. In 2001, the Ministry of Agriculture recognized it as a food unique to the region, and today you find it on restaurant menus throughout Chianti. I prepare it with beans, lemon, and olive oil—like tuna.

"Ric-caaar-DO!" Dario had a way of saying a name so that the middle syllable was stretched out long and impatiently, with a last irritated stress on the final one. Riccardo appeared, panting, his cheeks even rosier. "*Fi-nal-meehn-TE!*" Dario would say, stretching a middle syllable and spitting out the last one. Often, Dario simply invoked ingredients. "*Pe-PE!*" he shouted (that irritated final punch), and, in the back, everyone scrambled to find the pepper. "*A-GLIO!*" Dario said to no one, but boomingly, because he was playing a loud Puccini opera, and someone grabbed garlic from a straw basket, peeled it, and rushed it over. "*Boh!*" he said, a vocalized grunt conveying his wonder that you hadn't known he needed it without his having to ask, and then minced it in a hand-cranked mill stuck to the counter with a suction cup.

I tried to be helpful. I swept floors, washed pans, pulled rosemary leaves off stems. After two days, I knew enough to grind the pepper when Dario called for it. On my third day, I prepared red peppers for a fiery sweet jelly that Dario calls a *mostarda*. Seeing me writing down the recipe, Carlo grew concerned that I might walk off with the shop's most lucrative secret. Then he took me aside, a businessman trying to get back into the game, and suggested, in his heavy Tuscan accent, that maybe, when I got back to New York, the two of us could set up an enterprise together: "America is a very big country."

I went home with red hands. What is this place? It was famous for its *bistecca fiorentina*. Each steak weighed five pounds, was four to five inches thick, and cost nearly a hundred dollars. But it was rarely sold. On my first morning, three requests were refused for no reason I could understand, except, in Dario's eyes, the customers hadn't been deserving. Then, instead of selling meat, the place closed down for pepper jelly.

The next day, we made a terrine called a *pasticcio rustico.* In fact, it was very, very *rustico.* I couldn't imagine people eating it (neither the Maestro nor Teresa would touch it) unless they were very poor and without a refrigerator and hallucinating from starvation. The principal ingredient was old pork that had been aging in its own blood, sealed in a plastic bag. When you opened one, the smell hit you like a stinging slap of stinky molecules. The smell was so bad ("*Che mal odore!*" Teresa shrieked) that Dario rushed back to turn on the extractor fan: customers were uncomfortable. Another day, we prepared salt—bags of it, mixed with dried herbs—putting it through a grinder to make *profumo del Chianti.* The result was indeed aromatic and evocative of summer camp when I was eight, and, having been finely pulverized, was very snowlike. But, for the next six hours, we poured fluffy salt into tiny one-and-a-half-ounce jars. Weren't machines invented to do this sort of thing?

There were mishaps. I bashed myself, I cut myself, I caught on fire. I fell: I had been myopically focussed on peeling garlic, and hadn't noticed a bin of beef at my feet until I walked into it. Teresa looked up, dumbfounded by what she saw: this large American, inexplicably horizontal. When I landed in the meat, she rammed a fist into her mouth to stop from laughing hysterically until she confirmed that I hadn't been injured, and that's what she did: laughed hysterically. Then I was asked to help make the *soppressata.*

From what I can tell, *soppressata* is meat and lard in an intestinal casing—like salami, but bigger and fattier—and each region has its own version. Dario's is a *soppressata medicea*, a sixteenth-century preparation, with the cloves, cinnamon, nutmeg, orange zest, and sweet wine that would have featured in a Renaissance kitchen. (For Dario, Italian cooking peaked in 1533: why fix something that was never broken?)

I weighed the pig bits: two hundred pounds of knuckles, heads, feet, toenails, tits, tongues, plus some misshapen parts I couldn't identify. The Renaissance ingredients were added, and it was all boiled slowly until it became a gray sludge. The pot was then allowed to cool—but only a little. A pig's bony bits are full of gelatine and solidify like concrete if they reach room temperature.

We began. Teresa filled a cup with the lumpy mixture and emptied it into a canvas sack, not unlike a coarse sock, and handed it to me. I tapped it, letting the mixture settle, wiped off the sides—goo seeping through the weave—closed it up, and passed it to the Maestro, his gigantic hand enveloping my puny paw. He then looped a string around the bundle, like a parcel for the post office.

We established a rhythm. Teresa, the handover, the Maestro. At some point, Teresa started humming. She hummed so much I rarely noticed: a background noise of cheerfulness. But the Maestro noticed and joined in, whistling. The tune was "O Sole Mio."

The three of us continued. Teresa filled a sack, I tapped it, the Maestro tied it. Meanwhile, Teresa hummed and the Maestro whistled. Then they reached the end of the song. The Maestro cleared his throat.

No, I thought. He wouldn't dare.

"*Che bella cosa,*" he sang. It was an impressive baritone. "*Na jurnata 'e sole.*" What a beautiful thing a day in the sun is. I don't think I'd heard the words before. I was impressed that someone knew them. Then again, if anyone was going to know them, he'd know them, wouldn't he? After all, he's Italian.

Teresa replied. "*N'aria serena,*" she sang. Hers was a perfectly reasonable mezzo-soprano. She knew the words, too. She filled another sack and handed it to me, singing, "*doppo na tempesta.*" In the serene air after a storm.

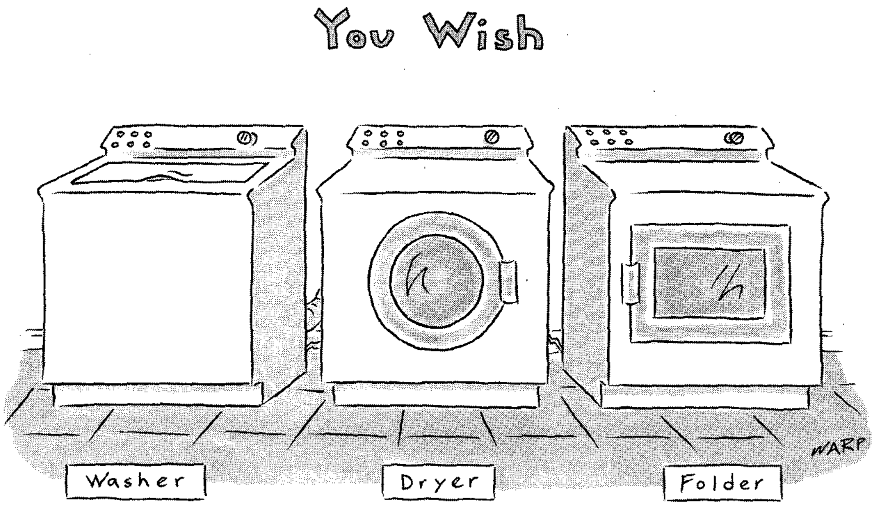
"*Pe' ll'aria fresca,*" the Maestro continued, "*pare già na festa.*"

"*Che bella cosa na jurnata 'e sole,*" Teresa replied. She set down her sack. The Maestro put down his as well and took a deep breath. They were preparing for the high notes of the famous refrain. (No, I found myself saying quietly. Please, don't do it. Don't you know this is a landmark piece of Italian kitsch? Think of Dean Martin. Think of Elvis. Please, stop.) They didn't stop. They tilted back their heads, projected their voices to the ceiling, and bellowed. "*O sole mio,*" they sang in unison, "*sta 'nfronte a te! O sole, o sole mio . . .*"

When they finished, they were silent for a long time. Finally, Teresa spoke. "*Bravo,* Maestro," she said, wiping away a tear.

"*Brava,* Teresa," the Maestro said, clearing his throat.

The refrain continued in my head as I walked home that night. Who would believe what I'd witnessed? No one would believe it. I'm not sure I believed it, except that I was covered with the evidence. I had *soppressata* gunk all over me, and two fingers were stuck together. I'd stepped in some as well, scarcely surprising, since there'd been *soppressata* slopping all over the floor. I could hear it: it made a sticky suction-cup sound as my heel pressed into the pavement and tried to come away again. Meanwhile, the refrain continued. In



fact, I was humming it. It might be kitsch, but it was catchy. Also, I couldn't remember a job where people sang while they worked.

My Greenmarket pig, without its rear legs, was shaped like a big box and snugly occupied the bottom half of my refrigerator. Today's project was the front, the forelegs, which I removed, another big arc, to keep the shoulders intact. Traditionally these are tough cuts, good for slow braising (or only good for slow braising). I was going to make sausages.

When we made sausages at the butcher shop, people often ate the meat raw, straight from the bowl, which—I don't know, call me old-fashioned—just seemed wrong. But it illustrated an attitude toward good meat: if you're lucky enough to get it, don't mess with it. The recipe the shop used (to the extent that one existed—everything was pretty much eyeballed) followed the same if-it's-good-don't-touch-it philosophy, and was three parts meat to one part back fat (from the top of the pig), plus garlic, pepper, and salt: that was it. You mushed it together until it became an emulsified pinkish goop, which you then stuffed into a canister that looked like a giant bullet. At one end of the cannister was a spout: this was where you slipped on the casing, about twenty feet of pork intestines, which the meat mix went into. (The task of getting the intestines onto the spout, which was not unlike putting on a condom the length of an African serpent, involved a universally recognized hand movement, and predictable Tuscan jokes were made at my expense.)

Tuscan sausages are smaller than their American cousins, each one demarcated with a string, a graceful loop drawn tightly into a knot—looping and tightening, looping and tightening, a symmetrically floppy, aesthetically appealing rhythm. Visitors often watched. One man whispered, "That's how my grandfather made them." Sometimes they wanted to chat (How could I chat? I'd blow my cover). I survived by limiting my replies.

"*Salsiccie*?" someone always asked.

"*Sì*," I answered forcefully, a singsongy Panzano rhythm, packing in all the notes that the locals seemed to get into a one-beat word.

"*Di maiale*?" they asked ("Pork?"), with tautological tenacity.

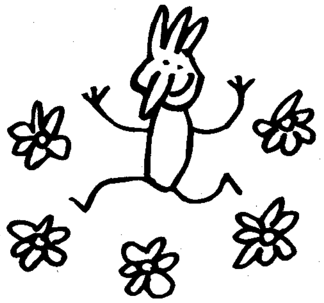
"*Sì*," I replied, impatiently, so they understood that I was very busy.

Once, I got in a jam. "What herbs do you use?" I panicked. "*Sì!*" I said inexplicably. I couldn't bear the prospect: the romance, the history, the handmade integrity of it all, only to discover that the sausage-maker was an American.

In the event, sausages were my breakthrough. Never in his life, Dario said, had he seen anyone master handmade sausages so quickly. "You are a natural butcher. In the history of your family, there were butchers. It is in your blood."

From now on, I was a butcher in training, although I was skeptical of the role performed by my family blood. I didn't have the heart to tell Dario, but I'd taken a one-day sausage-making course at the New School. O.K., it wasn't a Tuscan butcher shop (I'd caused consternation among my colleagues when I returned to my editorial job smelling of pork fat), but I'd learned some basics. No matter. I'd been promoted, and Dario handed me both his knife and, in recognition of the solemnity of the occasion, a steel glove to protect me from injury, the very thing he had used when he'd started out. (It was gigantic. I could have fit my head inside, and there was no way I could wear it.) My task, under the supervision of the Maestro, was to bone pigs that would be made into *arista*. *Aristos* is a Greek word meaning "the best" and, according to local legend, refers to a preparation first served at a Florentine summit in 1439, a convocation of Roman Catholic and Greek Churches: at the end, the Greek prelates were so satisfied they chanted, "*Aristos, aristos, aristos.*" Today, *arista* appears regularly on Tuscan menus, and although no two plates are the same, they feature an herbal mix stuffed into the best cut, what Italians sometimes refer to as the *carré* (the rack).

Dario used half the pig, the torso, which was boned and rolled up with an extravagance of herbs—garlic, thyme, fennel pollen, pepper, rosemary, and double-ground sea salt—and then cooked it in a hot oven for four hours until it emerged as a noisy sizzling racket, the fat rendered and popping, trailing a black acrid cloud of smoke, a glistening and rather beautiful thing. When sliced, you got the *carré*, tasting like a tender steak, the bacony stomach, and everything in between. But it was an unquiet food, which sent your taste buds in many directions—a slice was burned and tender, caramelized and salty, lean and fatty, exploding with herbs—and I could never eat much. After a few bites, your mouth was exhausted from the sensory pounding.



At 6:15 A.M., I stood in front of a pig. The Maestro was going to show me how to remove the bones from one half; I'd do the other. He took my knife, and his initial instruction went something like this. "*Guarda!*" (Watch!) "You do this" (*Così*). "You do that" (*Così*). "You cut these"—*tagliali*—"one by one. You work the spine loose, and *basta*."

He handed me the knife.

"Right," I said, and rehearsed the instruction, in a series of kung-fu strokes in the air. "I do this. I do that. I cut these one by one. I work loose the spine. And *basta*." (Who knows what I said?)

So, first: I did this. "This" involved pushing the animal onto its side—a hefty, slippery operation—so the back was on top. Why? No idea. But the Maestro said, do it this way. Therefore I did.

Second: I did that. "That" involved working loose a rectangular chunk of meat attached to what must have been the piggy's shoulder. (Shoulder? Neck? This business of figuring out what the animal bits once did was, I concede, a peculiar piece of speculation.)

Next: I cut "these" up. "These" were the ribs. To remove a rib, you sliced down one side, sticking close to the bone, constantly aware that every gram of tissue was meat and meat must never be wasted. If you looked up and your blade swerved, you were made to feel very bad. (It wasn't the lost revenue; it was that you'd squandered some animal: the rearing, cleaning, caring, fattening, slaughtering, transporting, and now butchering, and, at the end of a disciplined line of purposefulness, you'd lost your concentration—*Cazzo!* You dick!—and a bit of the animal couldn't be used. How

PLANET

A little girl needed
her damaged brother for courage.

He was insulation
from the distant
inkflowers—
she shed her weakness
onto his metal pans.

The little moon moved
in its dust belt
and for a long time
there was a balance:
planet, moon.

What terrible energy
it takes to move a satellite.
It was as though two sets of hands
were struggling
for possession of a ball.

When it slid out of her grip,
she kept asking,
"Didn't I keep my promise?"
But slowly she grew accustomed
to the unobstructed view.

—*Frances Brent*

---

could you!) Then you sliced down the other side, the white of the rib again flaking up against your blade. What you were doing was creating an outline of a bone and freeing it so you could pull it up by the tip, tearing the tissue underneath while also trimming it gently—pulling and trimming, pulling and trimming.

Finally, I worked the spine free. This was an early lesson in using a butcher knife: not to use it. I used my fingers instead—and gravity: *that* was the point of heaving the pig onto its side, so that, with all the poking and pushing, the spine might fall away naturally. Then: *basta!* I looked at my watch. It was eight o'clock. Half a pig had taken me an hour and forty-five minutes. There were twelve more to do.

The Maestro came over to inspect my work. "You see that part," he said.

"This part?" I said, pointing to a pink rectangular steak.

"Yes, that part. It's the best one of the animal."

"This part," I said. I recognized the significance of the exchange. I was being instructed by the Maestro himself.

"Exactly. That part. It is very good."

"This must be the *carré*," I said, giving the word my best French inflection.

"*Bravo*. It's true. Some people call it by the French name."

"Thank you."

"In Italian, it's called the *lonza*."

I repeated the word, and thanked the Maestro.

He continued. "This is also the tenderest part."

"I see."

"It is also very precious and very expensive. And you have sliced it in half."

"Oh, shit," I said in English. "I did that? Fuck." Then, remembering I was in Italy, I said (in Italian), "That was a mistake, wasn't it?"

"A very big mistake. That piece here is central to the entire preparation. Do you understand?" (*Hai capito*?) "But you've cut it in half. *Non va bene*."

"I won't do that again," I said, trying to be reassuring.

"*Bravo*," he said, and resumed his task, which involved a very large thigh.

My pig was legless, but there was one more cut, just between the shoulders, that I was hoping to have for dinner on the third day. This was the meat encased by the first four ribs, the "eye" of the chops. In Italian, this is called the *coppa* or *capocollo* (*capo* means head and *collo* means neck). Cured, it makes for an especially lean *salume*. Roasted whole, it is called a *rosticciana*, the best meal in the house. I cooked one on the bone, in a hot oven for about thirty-five minutes, and then ate the freshest meat I ever had in my life.

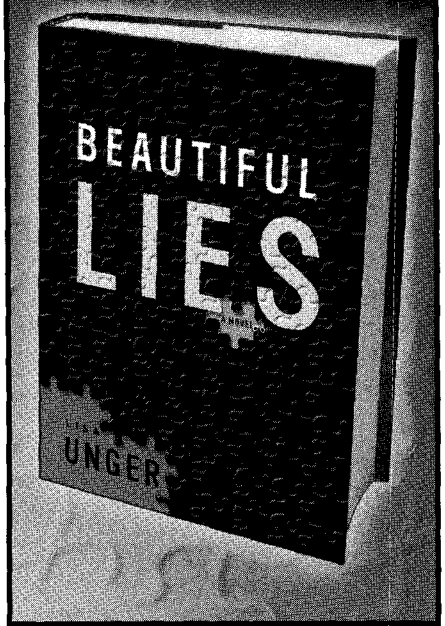
I made *arista* on the fourth day, boning the halved torso, finishing both sides with a black blanket of pepper, a green blanket of rosemary, and the salt blizzard, then rolling them up like giant Christmas logs and cooking them until they were blackly smoking.

On the fifth day, I made a *ragù* for two hundred people.

On the sixth, I made headcheese, boiling the skull until the meaty bits came loose and set in their own gelatine.

On the seventh day, I contemplated the lungs, tempted by an ancient Roman recipe I found in Apicius, who recommends soaking them in milk, filling each cavity with eggs and honey (what, when you think about it, could be simpler?), sealing them back up, and boiling them until ready, the lungs bobbing like pool toys. He doesn't say when a lung is cooked, but I concluded that the virtue of having two is that if the first one isn't quite ready you know to wait a little longer for the second. In the end, I didn't cook the lungs. It was hard to throw them away. It seemed so wasteful—why buy a pig if you're going to throw away the lungs?—but I'd been working on this pig for a long time. It was the seventh day. I needed a rest.

We had many meals—four hundred and fifty of them, or what worked out to less than fifty cents a plate—as we ate from the snout (which went into the sausages) to the tail (which I added to the *ragù*). But the lesson wasn't in the animal's economy. This pig, we knew precisely, had been slaughtered for our table, and we ended up feeling an affection for it that surprised us. ♦



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PERSONAL HISTORY

VESSELS

Irene Raeburn: born December 28, 2004; died December 24, 2004.

BY DANIEL RAEBURN

On our third date, Rebekah gave me one of her bowls. We sat at my kitchen table, her bowl between us, while she told me how she'd made it. She explained that a potter needs to throw the same pot over and over until the shape of the vessel becomes second nature, until she can form it so fluently that even her slipups grow spontaneous and confident. I turned Rebekah's bowl in my hands as she pointed out the accidents that had occurred during its creation. On the wheel, the lip of the pot had relaxed from a strict circle to a more comfortable roundness. Inside the kiln, the iron glaze on a neighboring pot had vaporized, ghosting its ruddy afterimage like a blush across the bowl's glossy cheek. These imperfections were what Rebekah cherished. Mistakes made the clay human.

Rebekah had innumerable freckles, small, weathered hands, and dirty overalls. A year or so later, at that same kitchen table, I asked her to marry me. She said yes, and in no time she was pregnant. After a few months, just as she was growing heavy, our baby died. We never found out why. Miscarriages are usually for the best—that's what everyone said, and that's what we said, too.

In the spring of 2004, five months after the miscarriage, Rebekah was pregnant again. One hot summer morning, there was pain, blood, and a grim drive beside a blue Lake Michigan to the emergency room, but this time our baby persevered. At twenty weeks, an ultrasound revealed that our survivor was a girl and in good health. As proof, the technicians gave us a black-and-white image of her suspended in limbo. She looked like an alien glimpsed through a telescope, a white dwarf forming in a distant galaxy.

Her name came to me in the night as I was falling asleep, her hands and feet drumming against Rebekah's belly and my palms. Good night, Irene, I thought, I'll see you in my dreams. I didn't know anything about this song other than the chorus, which haunted me just as a song is intended to. Irene Raeburn: Rebekah also liked the sound of it, and so the name stuck. I did see Irene in my dreams. She appeared as she had in the ultrasound, a cloud growing in the warm, humid air beneath our blankets.

After a Christmas party, when she was more than eight months along, Rebekah had to sit down. She felt dizzy and queasy, but she took a startled pleasure in caressing her visibly thrumming belly.

"Irene's kicking like crazy," she said. "She's never kicked this hard. Never."

"Any day now," I said, "any day." I wound my scarf around my neck and shrugged into my coat, offered Rebekah my hand.

Three days later, Rebekah called me at home from our midwife's office. I raised the receiver to my ear, heard a silence that I sensed was Rebekah's, and felt anguish tremble like electricity. I knew immediately that Irene was dead. When Rebekah at last uttered my name, the crack in her voice confirmed it.

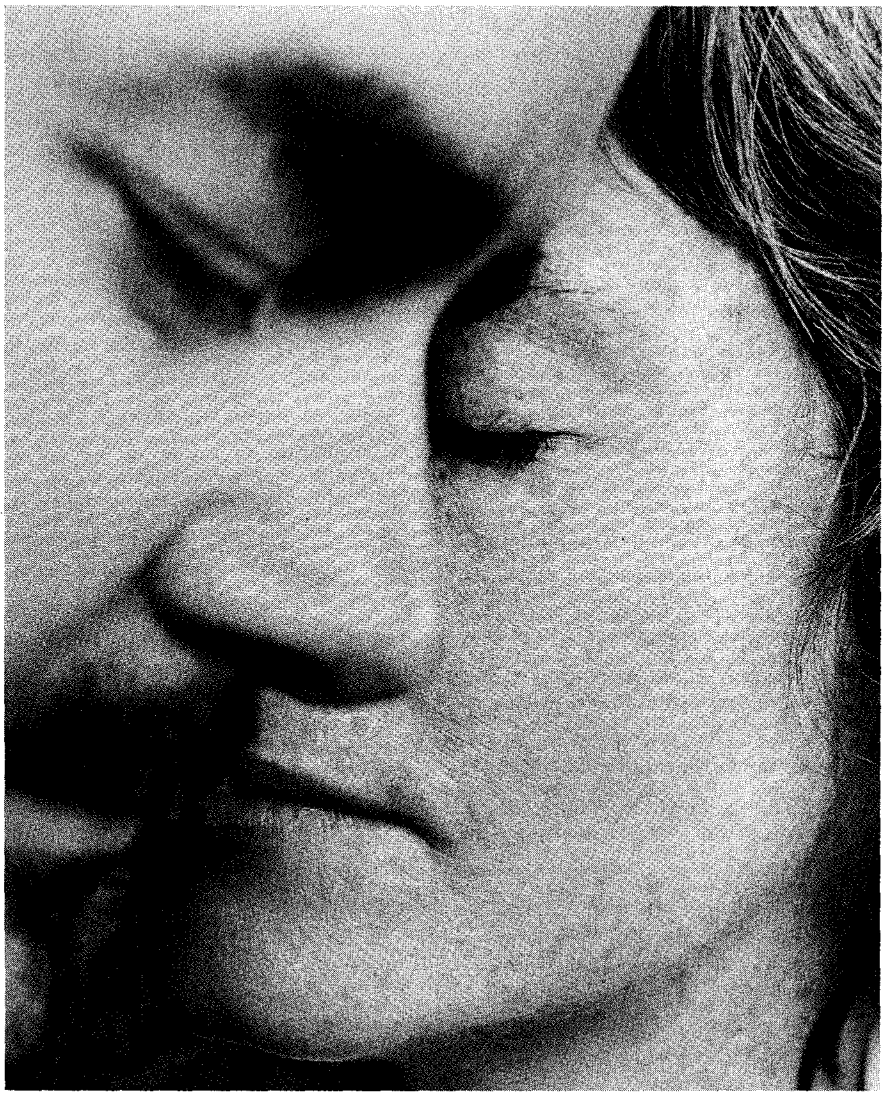
A quiet African man piloted me in his yellow taxi toward our midwife's office. His radio emitted news of a tsunami that had just struck Asia, India, then Africa, killing so many thousands that the authorities would never be able to count all the dead. Lake Shore Drive slipped past. Chicago's concrete sky weighed on the frozen lake and the stone and steel downtown, where families from around the planet had gathered to photograph themselves shopping and ice-skating beneath trees whose bare stalks branched like capillaries for giant brains that had gone missing.

At the office, the receptionist regarded me gravely, then showed me to where Rebekah was waiting. Rebekah's pants were unzipped. She'd been running from room to room, from test to test, carrying her parka and holding up her pants. She took me into her arms and held me as though I were her child.

Our midwife told us that we could cut Rebekah open, extract the body, and be done. A Cesarean, cheap and fast. But she asked Rebekah to consider going through childbirth. Doing so would give her slightly better odds of success in any future pregnancy. Of course, she warned, a hormonally induced delivery would require a day or two or three of labor. Eventually, Rebekah said, "O.K." Her assent sounded minuscule, as though spoken by a girl.

We drove to the hospital and checked in to the maternity ward. Rebekah and I worried that we did not belong with the normal parents, but the head resident assured us that stillbirth was birth and that we were parents. "But what you're going through sucks," she said. "It just sucks."

Our room came with a candy-colored baby blanket and a matching beanie. I told the nurse who injected Rebekah with hormones that we wouldn't be needing the clothes. "They're for the photos," she said. I stared at her. She knew what our situation was. "We won't be needing photos," I said. She removed the clothes, but after dark she returned them. She set them on a table in the far corner of the room and petted them, as though putting them down for the night. She whispered, "In case you change your mind."



Daniel Raeburn and Rebekah Wiest, December, 2005. Photograph by Elinor Carucci.

In the middle of the night, voices murmured through one wall, growing louder and more rushed until a baby cried out, clear and angry, accompanied by cheers. Rebekah rustled, then shifted. She was just a shadow. So was I.

In the morning, a social worker sat beside us. She had to verify that we were certain about the photographs. "I know this sounds weird," she said, "but parents in your situation who decline the photographs often return, begging us to please let them see a photo of their child. Don't you at least want the option to see photos—not now, but someday?"

"No," I said. Rebekah shook her head, and I signed papers promising not to sue anyone. The social worker asked if there was anything else we wanted to talk about, anything at all. I told her about the cry in the middle of the night. "That must have been hard," she said.

Rebekah didn't say anything. "Yeah," I said, "but it was also kind of life-affirming." It wasn't, but I knew that I'd have to see it as such—not now, but someday.

The social worker left her business card and a pamphlet she called "literature," which featured a Teddy bear dressed in overalls. A butterfly had alighted on the Teddy bear's nose, forcing him to cross his eyes and smile. "When Hello Means Goodbye," the title read. Inside was a collection of advice and verse that was written by other bereaved parents and untouched by affectation or talent. Rebekah dropped the booklet onto the nightstand, but I found succor in every artless word.

The booklet also presented a series of black-and-white photographs of a woman propped up in a hospital bed, holding an inert baby while her husband stood by. None of these stills dared to show the baby's face.

In the afternoon, we were visited by Rebekah's best friend and Rebekah's sister. When they arrived, I was sitting beside Rebekah's bed, wearing a new sweater and reading aloud from a magazine while we waited for the labor to intensify. We appeared perfectly normal. Realizing that there was nothing they could do, our loved ones cried.

Then they sat with us as we drank tea from paper cups. Our midwife put on a cardigan and joined us. Night was falling outside, but nobody stood to turn on a light. In the room, a spell was falling and none of us dared to dispel it.

We told our own birth stories. I stood to tell mine. My brother and I were delivered by a doctor who did not know, in the pre-ultrasound nineteen-sixties, that my mother was carrying twins. When he broke the news to my father, the doctor, a Japanese man, was ashamed. "So sorry," he said, bowing. "You have not one but *two* healthy boys." He bowed lower. "I only charge you for one."

As I bowed, all the women laughed.

Rebekah's labor grew heavy. Soon all she could do was breathe in and out. She sat still, physically in this world but attuning to the next one, the one that would deliver Irene. Our friend cried again as she said goodbye. Rebekah's sister said that she ought to be going and left. Then she returned. "I want to stay," she said. "I need you to stay," I said. She sat with me as Rebekah was increasingly possessed by her labor and by the strength she summoned to bear it.

Blood sloshed out of her and dripped onto the floor. The midwife pressed warm towels against Rebekah's genitals in an attempt to stop them from tearing. I took hold of one of Rebekah's legs, her sister took the other, and our midwife bent between, ready to catch the emerging corpse.

Someone once said that William Carlos Williams was sitting by the bed of one of his patients when she died. He turned to look out the window and saw a red wheelbarrow glazed with rainwater beside white chickens. I saw a salt-stained sidewalk under the funnel of a street lamp, a beige plastic armrest beside a blue blanket, my left foot in a black boot slipping in my wife's red blood.

Irene was in the breech position and she came forth rump first. Our midwife said, "Push," and Rebekah pushed, and pushed again, pushed so mightily that at the apex of her effort the red hole in the center of Irene's exposed butt opened and a black turd slithered out.

Rebekah expelled Irene in a final burst, and I watched the prunelike body, embalmed in gore and ichor, flop into the hands of the midwife. The nurse snipped the bobbing umbilical cord and whisked the body out of sight.

I bent down to Rebekah and whispered into her ear that she'd committed the bravest act I had ever witnessed. Rebekah tried to make a noise or nod but she was numb. She closed her eyes. Then I turned to face our baby.

The nurse had set Irene's collapsed body under a heat lamp so that it would stay warm to the touch. She asked if I wanted to cut the remaining tendril of umbilical cord. I did. The cord felt alive and muscular; it was like cutting through someone's finger.

Irene was red, yellow, and blue, as limp as if she'd been thrown against a wall. Her nose looked as though it had been driven back into her head; it was a raw, upturned pug.

"A beautiful girl," the nurse said, tenderly nudging Irene's pudenda with her finger. "With perfect little girl parts." She traced the inverted V of Irene's nose. "That's because she was breech," she said. "Coming out backward, babies always get their noses bent out of shape."

Irene had mooned us, shat at us, and now she'd got her nose bent out of shape. She even smelled like a sourpuss: slightly sulfurous and vinegary. She was a pickled imp, delivered at last from whatever it was that she had died fighting. I gathered my girl into my arms.

The nurse who'd induced Rebekah had tried to warn me. "The tone," she'd said. "After they've been dead for a few days, they don't have the tone. The tone is missing." What she meant was that my girl would feel lifeless. She had no blood pressure and so her face splayed flat in my hand, like a deliquescent tomato. I placed my thumbs above Irene's eyelids and eased them upward, intending to look into her eyes, but the milky, unfathomable slivers awed me and I stopped. The unknitted plates of her skull grated and clicked as I cupped my palm and rounded her face to its likeness, which I recognized. It was not like looking into a mirror. Facing a mirror you see merely your own countenance; facing your child you finally understand how everyone else has seen you.

When Rebekah opened her eyes, I handed her our child. She looked down at Irene's misshapen face. "Take her!" she cried. "Can you take her!" Rebekah's sister stepped in and scooped her up. I sat on the bed and ran my hands up and down Rebekah's hunched back as if to dampen her quaking. Her sister walked our baby around the room, rocking her and singing her assurances.

The afterbirth was causing problems. The placenta that Rebekah had been growing for eight months was supposed to slide out at the end of the umbilical cord like a veined lung, but it wasn't coming. It had somehow adhered itself to the uterus, possibly because of scarring from the summer's near-miscarriage. Our midwife tugged

PIZZA
MStevens

on the dangling end of the umbilical cord. The cord snapped. "That's not supposed to happen," our midwife said. "I mean, it happens, but it's rare." She called in the supervising doctor.

The doctor inserted her right arm into Rebekah up to the elbow. She braced herself and pulled. She exhaled, pulled harder. Rebekah's sister and I attempted to restrain Rebekah without slipping. I felt something inside her tear and the doctor slid back, holding a raw piece of the organ. She handed it to the nurse and reinserted her arm. She pulled until she again stood back, clutching another purple fistful. "I don't want you to have to leave this room and check into surgery," she said. "Not now, not after all that you've been through." She reinserted her shaking arm and pulled. As I held on to Rebekah, her rigidity absorbed my own trembling. This time I did not look at anything.

Finally, the doctor stepped back, her bloodied arm hanging at her side. "I think that's it," she said. She asked the midwife and the nurse to gather up the scraps of afterbirth and send them to the lab. Then a fever seized Rebekah, racked her, made her shiver so alarmingly that her sister and I gathered a mound of blankets and buried her beneath it. The nurse stuck more needles into her. Rebekah slipped into sleep, her eyelashes like a pair of parentheses that had each toppled to the side, releasing whatever secret they'd contained.

It was late now and dark and I was left alone with my family. Rebekah's face floated like a freckled moon above the blankets that swaddled her. I marvelled at her, as if she were my child and I were seeing her for the first time. Across the room, Irene lay in the glow of the heat lamp.

The night nurse stepped in and told me that they were coming to take my baby away. Did I want to spend just a little more time with her?

"No," I said. "We've had our goodbyes."

In the middle of the night, I startled awake. A voice had sung Irene's song to me, but with a twist. "Good night, Irene," it sang. "I'll see you, but only in my dreams." That's the chorus, I thought. *Only* in my dreams. Never in real life. By naming my daughter thoughtlessly, I had jinxed her. I had killed her.

I recalled the chorus radiating from a jukebox amid the smoky hubbub of a tavern, playing over the film credits scrolling down a blackened theatre screen, howled by a friend from college, a rocker named Zollo. Zollo, who had chronic throat problems, had once set up a piano in the back yard at a party and croaked out "Good Night, Irene" as his final song. As he sang, I'd stood there with my beer and wondered, Where have I heard this song before?

Fifteen years in the future, that's where. I fell back asleep and dreamed of Rebekah sobbing. When I awoke in the dark, she was sobbing. I fell back asleep. At first light I woke again and felt a split second of equanimity, of tranquillity, before I remembered that none of it had been a dream.

We'd heard a lot from parents about the agony of lying awake at night, tortured by their children's cries. Instead, we were tortured by each other's.

Rebekah and I stepped into the shower, where I washed her body as gingerly as would a newlywed. The hospital served us milk and eggs. We drove home in heavy traffic beside the gray lake. I waited as Rebekah limped up the three flights of stairs to our apartment. In front of our door was a box, standing like a sentinel. We knew what was in the box, but I carried it inside and opened it anyway. Rebekah contemplated each hand-me-down jumper, each bib, each onesie, before folding it and tucking it into Irene's dresser, beside Irene's cradle and Irene's toys.

We climbed into bed and spooned together. Rebekah's breasts wept milk, so she bound them.

If Rebekah and I had lived two hundred years ago, when Illinois was still prairie, she would already have borne a dozen or more children. Those who survived would have lived to their mid-thirties, the age Rebekah is now, the age at which she, too, would probably have died, probably in childbirth. But at least she would have been allowed to bury Irene with her own two hands. She would have been able to advertise her mourning with a black veil or a rent garment, so that strangers would have known to oblige her: not to attempt to amuse her, or to ask after her children. Nobody would have told her that stillbirth was a tragedy, or that she should try to make art about it, because every woman back then had babies who died.

The telephone began to ring. Only the older friends and relatives thought to send their wishes and prayers in writing. Everyone else wanted to talk. They wanted to feel for themselves what it was like for us to have glimpsed at once both the birth end and the death end of this wormhole we call life.

Rebekah's aunts insisted on visiting. They wanted to cheer us up. They were more nervous than we were; they greeted us with loud, determined voices and dramatic, almost frantic gestures. One yanked open a bag of nacho chips so violently that the chips burst out and skittered across the kitchen floor. I followed the aunts into the living room.

The *living* room? What was that supposed to mean?

One aunt talked until the other picked up a sentence and ran with it, overwhelming the silence I held to with increasing conspicuousness. I excused myself, said that I had to make some phone calls. I went into my study and closed the door. The phone rang. It was my project manager at work. I told him that my daughter had been born dead and that he'd have to excuse me from everything, at least for now. All morning I answered calls from our friends. Upon hearing the news, one collapsed. Her cries seemed to be my own, amplified through another vessel. I assured her that Rebekah and I were doing O.K. and asked her not to worry about us. Consoling her took all my strength, but it was easier than being in that living room.

Another friend told me about his great-great-grandmother's diary. This woman had settled a home on the prairie, just like Laura Ingalls Wilder, whose work I'd procured for Irene's library. Reading the diary, my friend had been surprised by how common a certain sentence was: " 'Baby died,' " he said. " 'Baby died.' " Almost every year—the phrase was like a refrain.

As soon as Rebekah's aunts left, the

fever that had seized her in the hospital returned. No more visitors, our midwife commanded. Strict bed rest. Rebekah's mother drove from Maine to help me watch over her daughter. On New Year's Eve, we sat on Rebekah's bed and served her steak and wine by candlelight. For several weeks, Rebekah's mother helped me with our shopping, cooking, and cleaning. She sewed new slipcovers for our furniture.

A couple of weeks into it, Rebekah broke down. "I have to start doing things for myself," she cried. "I'm not a baby!"

She didn't want to go back to her old job. When she had recovered enough to walk around, she got dressed and rode a bus to the skyscrapers downtown, where she took a job managing an office whose employees knew nothing about her but her name.

The results of the autopsy came. Irene had died for no apparent reason.

We had to have one. We considered the fact that Irene had heard us argue. Perhaps our slam-bang shouting matches across the kitchen table had alerted our daughter at her gut level to be frightened of us.

Rebekah remembered having got drunk at a birthday party before discovering she was pregnant. She'd had high blood sugar and low blood sugar. Her thyroid gland had been out of whack.

Before Christmas, I'd heard an anecdote. Ernest Hemingway had once boasted that he could write a novel that was only six words long. Asked to prove it, he took a napkin and wrote, "For sale: baby shoes, never worn." At the time, I'd repeated this anecdote gravely but wryly.

I fixated on the song. Twice it had come to me in the night, as unmediated as breathing, and I discovered why: the song is a traditional arrangement, meaning that no one knows where it came from; it exists in the air of our culture.

The very last words that I heard her say
Were "Please sing me one more song."

Irene, good night
Good night, Irene,
I'll see you in my dreams.

Last Saturday night I got married,
Me and my wife settled down.
Now me and my wife are parted,
I'm gonna take another stroll downtown.

Stop rambling, stop your gambling,
Stop staying out late at night.
Go home to your wife and family,
Sit down by the fireside bright.

I love Irene, God knows I do,
Love her 'til the seas run dry
And if Irene turns her back on me,
I'll take morphine and die.

Huddie Ledbetter, better known as Leadbelly, is often given credit for writing this song, but he was merely the first to record it. According to legend, he heard it when he was in jail for attempted murder. When he got out, the song made him famous, and vice versa.

Rebekah and I tried to be strong for each other. But if I attempted to joke she saw me laughing when our only child was dead. If she wanted to visit a friend, I saw her abandoning me to my grief. By trying to be strong, we hurt each other, and by trying to be normal we grew numb.

On a rainy Saturday, Rebekah and I walked to the Museum of Science and Industry to see an exhibit of human bodies that had been preserved in plastic and laid open for our viewing astonishment. Rebekah stayed in the exhibit hall for twice as long as I. She made a side trip to see the museum's permanent collection of preserved babies. Fetuses, as people are always careful to say. On the walk home, Rebekah was calm, almost peaceful; it was as if those dead babies, folded in their jars, had reminded her that she was not alone.

After a month, we prepared for our first night out with other people—dinner at a friend's place. Our friend was eight months pregnant. She and her husband had moved into a big old house, and a celebration was in order. As we neared their driveway, running late, Rebekah started crying. "I can't do it," she said. "I can't."

I pulled over while traffic whizzed by. For more than a month I'd been inundated by family. Family! I needed to see my friends.

Rebekah needed to be alone. So I drove her home. The only words she spoke on the drive were to the effect that she didn't want to bring her curse to bear upon our friends. When I cast doubt on this superstition, Rebekah refused to elaborate. "I just really hate myself right now," she said.

I wanted to argue with her, but I didn't know how. I dropped her off at our door and drove back to our friend's house, where, surrounded by boxes and empty rooms, I picked at a casserole under inadequate lighting and talked about anything but.

After Valentine's Day, Rebekah and I returned to the hospital to attend a meeting of people who had "experienced perinatal loss"—miscarriages, stillbirths, accidents, babies with deformities so monstrous that the parents had elected to pull the plug.

Under humming fluorescent lights was a conference table with coffee and untouched cookies, ringed by twenty or so frightened faces, one of which was flashing indignant looks and leaking angry tears. The woman said that she'd lost her girl and now everyone wanted her to pretend that her girl had never existed. The rest of the room seconded her complaint. We finished each other's sentences. At last we were among people who could understand us. Society was on trial and we were the jury.

Everyone outside the room seemed to think that having another child would somehow erase the loss of this one, that death was some kind of math problem to be overcome by procreation. Everyone was supportive, but they were all secretly hoping that "it" would get better, that "things" would go back to normal, as if normal were an option, as if normal even existed. If one more person encouraged us to put it—it!—behind us, we might just lose *it*.

I asked the room, "What do you say when people ask you if you have kids? If I say yes, they're going to ask about them. If I say no, I'm lying."

Nobody knew how to answer my question.

At some point, a Mexican woman began to speak through her translator while her husband kneaded her hand. She had been carrying twin boys, she explained. For five months everything was fine. Then the ultrasound revealed that the heart of one of the twins had stopped beating. He had died, except he didn't die. His brother's heart came to his rescue by pumping enough blood for both of them. His brother kept him alive. But that baby was going to die, too, because his heart couldn't take the strain. So this woman flew to see a specialist who could extract the doomed brother so that his savior might live. But something went wrong. The translation wasn't clear, but in the operating room both of her boys wound up dead.

"My heart," the dad said in English, "it has been cut."

I cried, not because I'm a twin, and not because I felt for these parents, though I did. I cried because I was hearing a story that was worse than mine. I cried with relief. I was still lucky. We were still lucky. For the first time since Irene had died, I wasn't angry.

To claim Irene I drove to a place that called itself a home. There I paid a man who called himself a mortician to hand over paperwork, along with what he called cremains. The ashes were stored in a cardboard box laminated with faux wood grain, like the vinyl panelling that adorns family recreation rooms and the flanks of station wagons. Inside the box was a gilded tin; inside the tin was a plastic bag closed at the top with a twist tie from which dangled a dog tag: "MONTROSE CEMETERY 27683."

At home, I removed the baggie and threw out the box and the tin. I slipped the dog tag into an envelope along with the death certificate—there was by law no birth certificate—licked the envelope, and sealed it. After a moment of deliberation, I filed the envelope under "Medical Bills." After another moment of deliberation, I made a new file folder—"Irene Raeburn"—slid the envelope in there, and filed it after "Investments." Then I wept. That was my fatherhood.

Her ashes weren't like fire ashes. They were sandy, with tiny bits of bone not quite incinerated by the furnace, like the crumbled shells and coral that arc along the seashore, marking the line where the tide retreated. There wasn't much: a handful or two, about what a family of four would shake out of their shoes after a Saturday at the beach.

Rebekah and I already knew which of her pots would hold the ashes. It was a squat vase that could hold only a single flower. Its small, circular foot swelled to a bulbous middle before contracting at the top to a nipple-like eye. The eye was so small you couldn't see inside it. You could put things in but they wouldn't easily come out. The urn resembled nothing so much as a top, spinning around on its point.

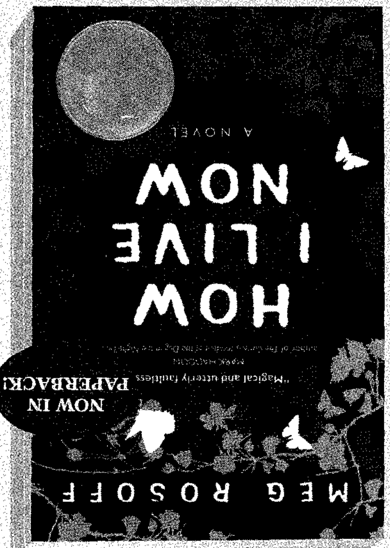
Rebekah had glazed it a glassy gray, like ice under an overcast sky. This glaze was webbed with nearly invisible cracks, like the fissures that knit the inside of an old and cherished tea mug. She'd spun the pot on its foot and slashed brushfuls of a darker gray glaze around the shoulder of the pot, and this darker glaze had insinuated itself into the network of minute cracks, forming veined crystals that bloomed like snowflakes from bruised winter clouds, spiralling in toward the eye of the urn. A few burnt streaks of carbon still adhered to the sides. This clay had also passed through a furnace.

I sifted the ash through a sieve into a mixing bowl. I rolled a sheet of paper into a cone, lodged the funnel into the pot's aperture, and poured in the fine ash. It hissed like sand from an hourglass. I took the larger, unsifted bits of Irene from the sieve and dropped them into the eye one piece at a time. When I came across a lump that was too large to fit I put it aside. I resolved to begin a second pile of these larger pieces, one I would return to later and—what? Crush with a hammer? But at the end of my sorting I was confronted by only the one lump. Upon studying it, I realized that it was a molten zipper pull. I debated keeping the relic, until Rebekah came home from work and reminded me that Irene had never been dressed in anything with a zipper. The zipper was from the body bag.

Although I will never forget seeing Irene, I have already forgotten what she looked like. I can no longer recall, exactly, her face. In the absence of photographs, all that remains is the image from her final ultrasound. I have returned again and again to this image and peered into it. The phantom gathering of features is so cloudy that my daughter could be anyone. ♦

What if your world was turned upside down?

To live is to believe, to believe is to survive.



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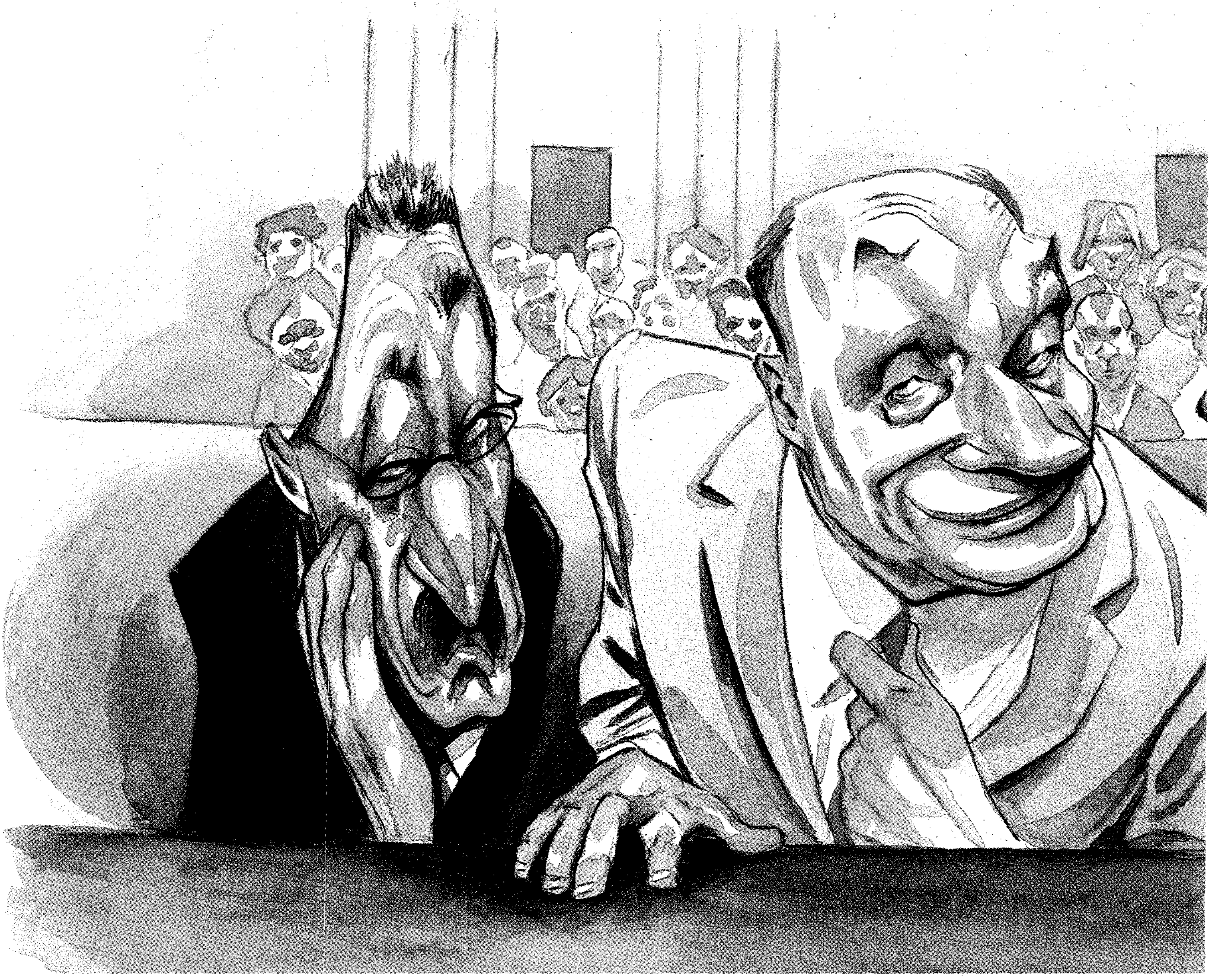


STEVE BRODNER

IN THE COURTROOM

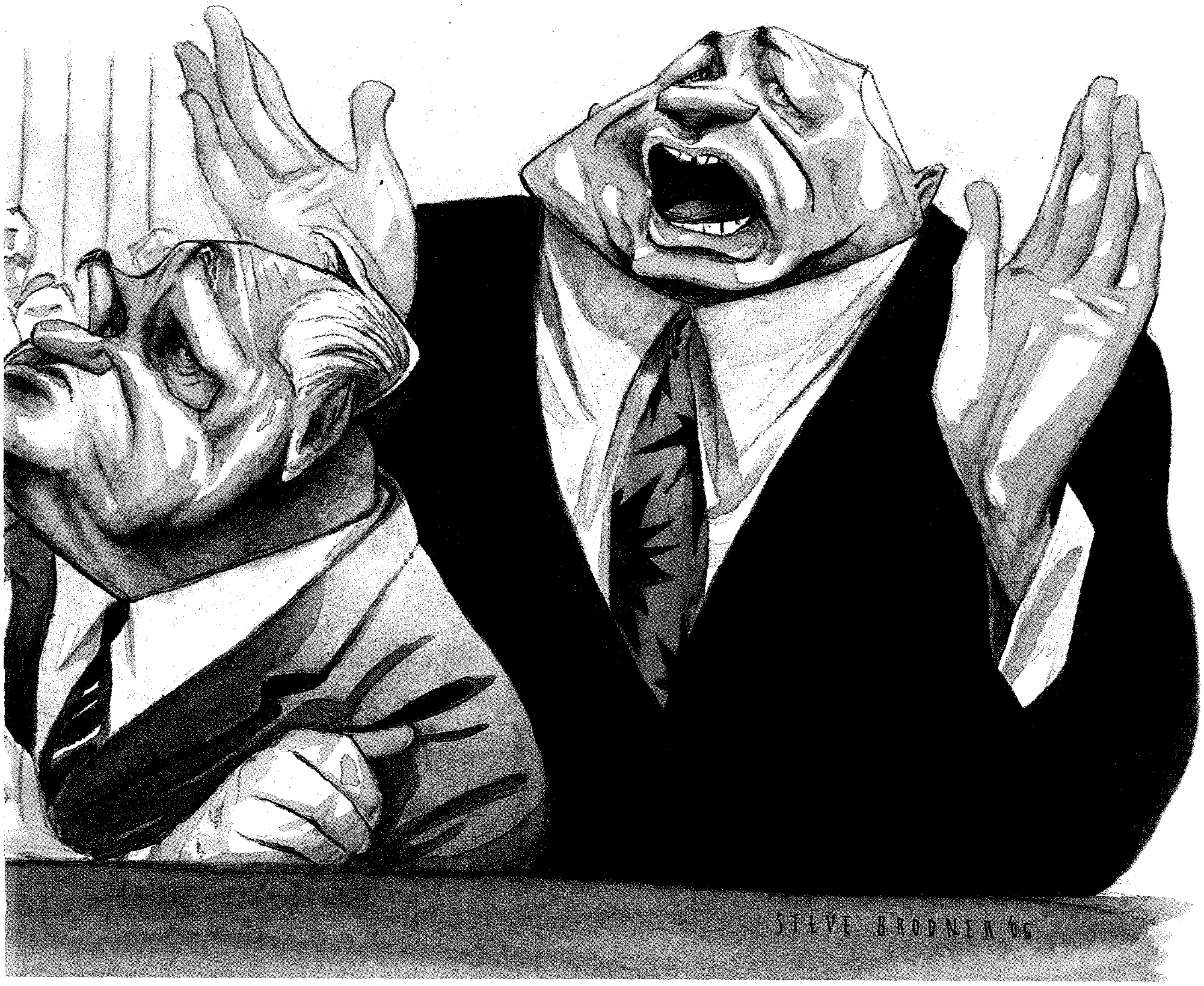
KISS CITY

The unmaking of the Mafia cops.

BY BEN McGRATH

In United States v. Caracappa and Eppolito, in which a pair of decorated former New York City detectives were charged with moonlighting as Luchese-family hit men, the role of star witness fell to a sickly seventy-two-year-old dope dealer named Burton Kaplan. Kaplan has spent the past nine years in federal custody, where he suffered his second minor stroke and third detached retina. He also endured high blood pressure, poor hearing, arthritis, prostate cancer, and Raynaud's disease. None of this stopped him from testifying for the better part of four days, with unflagging precision, about his years of service, in the nineteen-eighties and early nineties, as the middleman between a Mobbed-up killer named Anthony (Gaspipe) Casso and the two cops, Louis Eppolito and Stephen Caracappa, who he said helped Casso rub out suspected rats. ("Coöperating witnesses" is the government's term.) Kaplan didn't seem especially troubled that he had become, in his old age, exactly the sort of turncoat that he and his associates aimed to kill. "Anybody that's in jail hopes to someday get out of jail," he said. His current sentence—for running a multimillion-dollar marijuana-distribution ring—would have kept him in jail until his eighty-sixth birthday. Pending a judge's final decision, he should be in witness protection in time to celebrate the Fourth of July.

The charges brought against the cops, under the federal Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) Act, included eight murders and a variety of



obstruction-of-justice, money-laundering, and drug-related conspiracy counts: all told, the most startling criminal accusation ever levelled against individual officers of the N.Y.P.D. For a monthly retainer of four thousand dollars, according to the government, Eppolito and Caracappa served in effect as Cosa Nostra spies, passing along police intelligence, and, on a contract basis, for as much as seventy-five thousand dollars a job, they helped kidnap and kill. If this weren't enough to bring the *Newsday* columnist Jimmy Breslin, the *News*' Denis Hamill, the writer and TV commentator Jerry Capeci, and other veteran noir chroniclers to the federal courthouse in downtown Brooklyn for a reunion, alongside the dwindling ranks of bejewelled old men in tracksuits, there were other operatic touches: an uncontested Gambino lineage on the part of the cop Eppolito; an estranged gay son, Lou Eppolito, Jr., who attended every day, along with his lover, each with a shaved head; a pair of high-profile defense-attorney pals, Edward Hayes and Bruce Cutler, coming and going in complementary fedoras and overcoats; a highly respected eighty-four-year-old judge, Jack Weinstein, whose preferred method of listening to testimony seems to involve leaning back, tilting his head, and closing his eyes.

"I think I'm an average human being," the star witness said at one point, on cross-examination. But the story of Burton Kaplan's life, as it emerged, was at once remarkably international, spanning several continents, and remarkably provincial, set in a New York so small and narrow as to be almost unrecognizable. Kaplan, we learned, was born in Sheepshead Bay, and he confessed to being a gambling addict from the age of thirteen, although he persisted in showing law-abiding potential for a while longer, attending Brooklyn Tech, and then joining the Navy, where he studied Russian radio codes in Japan. He was even offered a job in the National Security Agency, he said, but he turned it down in order to return to Brooklyn, and join his family in the appliance business—principally, installing and repairing air-conditioners in and around the neighborhood of Bensonhurst, which was then a Mafia stronghold.

Gambling debts necessitate a lively entrepreneurial spirit, and Kaplan, it turned out, once concocted a scheme to sell hair

Rat-haters: Steve Caracappa, Ed Hayes, Lou Eppolito, Bruce Cutler. The defense built its case on a decline-and-fall narrative.

grease in Africa; when the grease turned brown in transit, he had a chemist try cooking the remains into Quaaludes. (It failed, and he went to jail.) He dealt in diamonds with the nephew of a government official in Upper Volta, now Burkina Faso. He sold Peruvian passports to the Hong Kong Chinese. And he did business with a Mr. Ho, from Hubei Province, in China, whom he called "one of the first people to represent a Communist country in the free world." All the while, back in Brooklyn and in a warehouse on Staten Island, he also sold clothes—leisure suits and bluejeans, Gloria Vanderbilt and Calvin Klein.

"I'm so enamored of him!" Breslin, one of half a dozen people now writing a book about the case, said during lunch recess one day. "He talks about designer jeans and dumping a body in the Connecticut River—because the ground was too frozen—in the same tone of voice!"

Kaplan, who wore large round glasses, blinked incessantly, and spoke in unbending Brooklynese, had a knack for introducing novelistic detail about incidentals. He said he learned that Gaspipe Casso was a rat in 1994, for instance, while taking a bath. The phone rang, and it was his lawyer, Judd Burstein: "So I got out of the tub and I wrapped some towels around me and—we had a telephone in the bathroom—I picked it up and I said, 'Yeah, Judd, what seems to be the problem?' "

The problem was that Casso could easily have implicated Kaplan in several of the thirty-plus murders that he eventually admitted to. Kaplan went on the lam, travelling under an alias, first to Mexico and then to Portland, before settling in Las Vegas. There he reconnected with his old cop friend Louie Eppolito, who had retired from the police force and moved West to start a new career as a screenwriter and actor—with limited success. (He played Fat Andy, a bit part, in the movie "GoodFellas.")

"I said, 'How come you're always in trouble with money?' " Kaplan testified, recalling one of his meetings with Eppolito. "He says, 'I collect snakes—very expensive snakes. And it costs a lot of money to feed them.' "

Kaplan's testimony illustrated one of the great flaws of the criminal-justice system: that small-time crooks—crooks, in some cases, with truly creative minds, of the sort that can dream of turning hair cream into Quaaludes—are sent to prison, where they have no choice but to befriend other crooks, thereby expanding the network of criminal conspiracy ever outward. It was in prison that Kaplan met a man named Frank (Junior) Santora, who had a cousin on the police force (Eppolito), and a friend high up on the Luchese masthead (Casso). And it was Frank Santora whom Kaplan described as having arrived at a Toys R Us parking lot on Flatbush Avenue, in the fall of 1986, with a man locked in his trunk:

> He pulled into the lot with the car that we had gotten him, and he stopped. . . . I said, "What's up, Frank?" And he says, "He was yelling and kicking in the trunk." And he says, "I had to pull over and I punched him to keep him quiet. And you have to be careful that he don't start screaming and yelling." And I took the key to the car and I walked away from Frankie and I handed the key to Anthony Casso. Casso looked up and he said, "Who are those two guys at the foot of the parking lot?" And I looked up and I recognized Louie and Steve, and I walked over to Frankie. I said, "What are they doing here?" He said, "They followed me to back me up." And at that time I thought, Wow, what great guys they were.

The man in the trunk was Jimmy Hydell, a twenty-six-year-old Gambino associate, whose body has never been found.

Lou Eppolito's father, Ralph, hated cops, because they lacked dignity and self-respect—they always sold themselves out for cheap. When Lou was in his early teens, Ralph would bring him along to the Grand Mark, a social club in Bedford-Stuyvesant where Ralph and his friends gambled and played cards. Every few hours, Ralph would hand Lou an envelope with five dollars in it, and send him outside to greet a couple of officers who liked to park across the street.

In Ralph Eppolito's estimation, there were only two things worse than cops: Feds and rats. The Feds, unlike the cops, had no appreciation for such local traditions as the payoff. They weren't from the neighborhood. They didn't play fair. And if there was any confusion about rats it was erased by Joseph (Joe Cargo) Valachi's Senate testimony, in 1963, which the Eppolitos watched on television as a family at their home in East Flatbush, otherwise known as Pigtown. Lou recognized some of the names that Valachi gave up as belonging to men who'd visited the house.

Ralph Eppolito was one of four sons born to Luigi the Nablidan, a watchmaker who came over from Naples in 1901, and who later ran with Charles (Lucky) Luciano and Carlo Gambino during the Depression. Like his brothers

"Do you want a clean one?"

Jimmy and Freddy, Ralph went into the family business, earning the nickname Fat the Gangster. (The eldest son, Joey, went to work as an honest longshoreman, and was thereafter rarely acknowledged.) Ralph dressed impeccably, and he was a stern, often violent father, who made sure to impart a particular kind of paternal wisdom: retaliating in front of witnesses is not classy; individuals must *earn* your disdain; no one is killed without a reason.

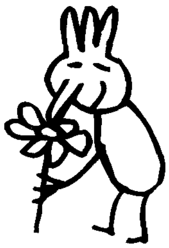
As a boy, Lou resented his father. He dressed sloppily and focussed on girls and lifting weights. In high school, at Erasmus Hall, the alma mater of Bernard Malamud and Barbra Streisand, Lou was, by his own recollection, "a little fuckin' Casanova." For his bodybuilding, he was named Mr. New York City in 1967. And in 1968, shortly after his father died, he did the unthinkable: he applied to the Police Academy.

Eppolito recounted his family history, and his experiences on the job, in "Mafia Cop: The Story of an Honest Cop Whose Family Was the Mob," a book he co-wrote with the former *Post* reporter Bob Drury. The book's contents were ruled off limits to the prosecution by Judge Weinstein before the start of the trial, but for all its misguided boastfulness "Mafia Cop," if taken largely as the truth, presents a case study of a man's struggles to maintain his dignity in a changing world, and of the perpetual conflict between individual pride and institutional necessity.

By Eppolito's account, New York in the nineteen-seventies was a frightening place, particularly in the middle- and outer-ring neighborhoods of Brooklyn and Queens and the Bronx, as black and Hispanic gangs moved in on the small-time rackets once reserved for ethnic whites—Jews, Irish, and Italians. The heroin trade was booming. Survival on the streets demanded quick and decisive action, not subtlety of judgment and equivocation. Eppolito had a handy tag for the kinds of people who weren't making Brooklyn any safer: they were the "three P's—perps, pussies, and pencil-pushing prigs."

He was assigned first to the Sixty-third Precinct, in Marine Park, a traditionally middle-class neighborhood in Brooklyn, where twice he was caught in the middle of a shootout. He quickly adopted what he later came to call the Cosa Nostra interpretation of police procedure, which involved bashing heads and shooting first and asking questions later. He broke the precinct's rookie arrest record after just eight months.

Eppolito was next transferred to the Twenty-fifth Precinct, in Harlem, where gunfire was prevalent, and had his first experience of killing a man. "Really, who gives a fuck?" he wrote. "We weren't out there shooting priests. I learned something about myself during that gunfight. I not only had the capacity to kill, I had the capacity to forget about it, to not let it bother me."



He became friendly with the city's crime reporters—guys who knew how tough it was on the street, and who weren't often swayed by the misgivings of "liberal agitators" and civilian review boards. A *News* headline in 1973 announced, "EPPOLITO DOES IT AGAIN." A *Times* story from 1974 credited Eppolito with helping to prevent what a sergeant speculated could have been "one of the biggest gang wars ever in Brooklyn," between the Jolly Stompers and the Tomahawks.

Eppolito was aware that some of his tactics wouldn't stand up to bureaucratic review, but he was convinced that he was serving the greater good. The longer he stayed on the job, the more he began to appreciate his father's fearlessness, and his code of honor. The new breed of gangster he found himself up against—the Black Liberation Army, the Disco Gang—obeyed no such code, and left civilian casualties, something he believed his relatives never did. "The public will never understand the mentality of a cop—a good cop, anyway," Eppolito wrote. "In a way, it's very similar to the mentality of Organized Crime. You do what you have to do and don't think twice about consequences, because when you gotta go, you gotta go."

After a brief, failed marriage that produced Lou, Jr., in 1969, Eppolito met Frances Todisco, the daughter of an elevator operator in the Bronx. At their wedding, in 1973, Lou requested that the band play the theme from "The Godfather," and his Uncle Jimmy, a.k.a. Jimmy the Clam, handed him an envelope stuffed with cash.

Eppolito met Steve Caracappa, a Brooklyn-born Vietnam vet, after he was promoted to detective, in 1977. Caracappa, who was seven years older, was a thinker, reserved where Eppolito was excitable, and they made an ideal pair. At one point, while investigating the Disco Gang, Eppolito was thrilled to find an especially ornery perp named David (Big T) McLeary lying naked in his bed. He broke his knuckles on McLeary's head, and had his hands tightly around the perp's neck, when Caracappa pulled him off. "Without Steve, I guarantee you David McLeary would be six feet under right now instead of doing three consecutive life terms upstate," Eppolito wrote. (McLeary's girlfriend filed a grievance, but Eppolito was cleared.)

In 1978, Luigi the Nablidan died, and after the funeral Eppolito accepted another envelope from his Uncle Jimmy. A year later, as Eppolito was preparing to serve on the Pope's protection detail, he learned that Jimmy and his son Jim-Jim had been killed, with permission from the Gambino boss Paul Castellano. Eppolito's cousin Frank Santora, who had served as Jimmy the Clam's bodyguard, told him to expect a phone call, and three days later Castellano summoned Eppolito to a sit-down.

Castellano explained that his beef had been more with the son than with the father—that "the kid did a lot of bad things wrong"—and asked if there was anything he could do to make amends. Lou walked away, offended: "If my old man had told me anything, it was never to whore myself out for a dollar."

In the months following Jimmy's death, Fran saw a noticeable change in Lou's behavior. "I mean, when Steve Caracappa came over you'd think there were two Godfathers sitting at our kitchen table," she said in "Mafia Cop." "The talking with the hands. The drinking of the double espressos. '*Salud*'-ing each other to death after every sip. And Louie was starting to kiss everybody on the cheek. Before, he'd just kiss the family, and shake hands with anyone else. Now it was Kiss City."

In the spring of 1983, Eppolito was on patrol, driving by the Café Italia, on Eighteenth Avenue in Bensonhurst, when he spotted a "greaseball" adjusting his crotch and looking Eppolito's way. Not one to back down, Eppolito stopped the car and grabbed the guy by the throat. "I was just fixin' my pants," he protested. Eppolito wrote, "I told him that if he ever fixed his pants like that in front of me again I'd fix what's inside his pants."

The greaseball was Rosario Gambino, a made man from the Sicilian crew, who was under surveillance from the Organized Crime Control Bureau, and Eppolito's exchange had been caught on tape: "a two-minute, off-the-cuff conversation that was about to ruin my career."

The next year, Gambino was arrested for selling heroin to a federal agent, and a week after that Eppolito was summoned to a hearing with Internal Affairs; the F.B.I. had found copies of police records in Gambino's home, and Eppolito was being accused of passing documents.

Eppolito insisted that he'd been Rembrandted—framed—but he was suspended for the duration of the investigation. Most cops he knew turned their backs, but the wiseguys from his old neighborhood paid their respects. "I always treated the men of Cosa Nostra with honor," he wrote. "I always did for them. And now they were offering to do for me. That thought fed me strength."

"Mafia Cop" was published in 1992, but the events it describes conclude in 1985, with Eppolito's acquittal, and with the restoration of his job—for which he'd lost nearly all esteem. (In the epilogue, he wrote, "The bad guys respected Louie Eppolito. Unfortunately, I cannot say the same for the good guys.") The first murder charged under the conspiracy occurred in 1986.

Eppolito retired from the N.Y.P.D. in December of 1989, and moved to Las Vegas a few years later with Fran and their three children: Andrea, Deanna, and Anthony. His old partner, Steve Caracappa, retired in 1992, and eventually joined him in Nevada.

"I went to visit my dad in Vegas in 2000," Lou Eppolito, Jr., told me. "As soon as we got to my father's house, five minutes later, Steve came in. And I found that a little odd. I was a little put back at that. I'm, like, 'What's *he* doing here?' Dad says, 'He lives across the street.' "

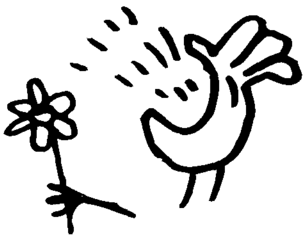
Last March, when federal agents searched Eppolito's house, they found glass cases full of knives, and a hundred and fourteen guns, including five assault rifles, a sawed-off shotgun, and a snub-nosed revolver with the words "Mafia Cop, Louis Eppolito" engraved on the handle. The arresting officer, Ken Luzak, told Eppolito, "Lou, it's been a long time coming."

"I know," Eppolito replied.

Eddie Hayes, who is best known as the inspiration for Tommy Killian, the hustling defense attorney in Tom Wolfe's "The Bonfire of the Vanities," offered what could be called the sartorial defense for his client, Caracappa, often injecting his cross-examinations with a stylistic critique: "Your taste in clothing seems to run toward the traditional, isn't that fair to say? Tweed jacket, nice dark tie?" "You used to like to dress very sharp, didn't you? You liked those special collars—what do you call them?"

Hayes's co-counsel, Bruce Cutler, in defending the writer Eppolito, provided strings of synonyms—"talkative, garrulous, loquacious"; "Hell, perdition, destruction"—presumably as a means of raising self-doubt in his less articulate witnesses. Cutler, who is hulking and bald, and resembles both Telly Savalas and Jesse Ventura, made his bones defending the late Gambino boss John Gotti. He has a booming rasp that his old friend Hayes once described as sounding like he "gargles Brillo pads for breakfast." Hayes is merely robust, and also bald. His most famous client, Andy Warhol (whom he represented posthumously), wrote that Hayes "looked like he was from 'Laverne and Shirley,' like a plant that people invite to parties to wear funny clothes and jump around and make things 'kooky.' . . . He said, 'I can get ya outta anything.' " Together, Cutler and Hayes looked, as one former prosecutor put it, "right out of central casting," which is another way of saying that their pocket squares probably cost more than the off-the-rack suits worn by their substantially younger adversaries in the U.S. Attorney's office.

The defense counsellors presented a tag-team physical-comedy routine, with Hayes, the speed guy, pacing to and from the witness stand while rubbing his crown (to signify skepticism) or clutching at the knot in his tie (as an expression of disgust). A study in mannered deliberation, Cutler assumed a series of poses, not unlike a bodybuilder's: the Astronomer (hands thrust toward the ceiling, head tilted up and to the left, staring into the light); the Atlas (bending and lifting an imaginary boulder several times in succession); the Receiver (arms parallel and outstretched, palms upturned); the Commander (palms slammed down on the lectern, slightly wide stance); the Puzzler (right hand on head, head cocked, left arm akimbo); and, my favorite, the Backward Stumbling Buddha (reverse shuffle steps into an increasingly wide stance, head down, palms together).



The act sometimes obscured a fairly well orchestrated decline-and-fall narrative—the "Mafia Cop" thesis, stripped of violence, and expanded to include not only wiseguys and cops but criminal defenders. (Cutler to Judd Burstein, Burt Kaplan's erstwhile lawyer: "You used to wear a big pair of pink glasses. . . . And you knew that lawyers certainly shared information in the criminal-defense bar, at least at one time, when there was a camaraderie, an esprit de corps. . . . You're in a different milieu. I hate to use these fancy terms. You're in a different milieu than you were. . . . Didn't you open a big office at one time that had green furniture and you served cappuccinos?") Modernity, in all its manifestations, was the perp, and good "neighborhood white boys" like Hayes (Irish, Jackson Heights) and Cutler (Jewish, Flatbush) and their clients were the victims.

And although Burt Kaplan was the star witness, the best performance in a supporting role, in keeping with this theme, belonged to Stephen Corso, a crooked C.P.A. whose Connecticut home and midtown Manhattan office life contrasted nicely with the blue-collar world of South Brooklyn. Corso, who has the heavyset build of a lapsed gym rat, strode into the courtroom wearing his dark hair slicked back and an artificial-looking tan.

Whereas Kaplan told stories freely and dispassionately, like a man unburdened, Corso exuded smugness in his reticence, slumping back and away from the microphone after each question. His testimony began as follows:

> Q: Were you at one time a Certified Public Accountant?
> A: I was.

Q: Did there come a time that you got into trouble with the law?
A: There was.
Q: How did you get into trouble with the law?
A: By misappropriating funds from clients.

Specifically, Corso told his clients how much they owed in taxes, and asked them to wire the money to his own bank account, so that he in turn could pay the government. His "misappropriation" scheme—which netted almost six million dollars over five years—was straightforward: he never paid the government. When he learned, in 2002, that federal agents were searching his office on Fifty-seventh Street, he, too, headed for Las Vegas.

Unlike Kaplan, Corso knew nothing of Mob assassinations and corrupt cops; his value lay elsewhere. The last of the eight charged murders occurred in 1991, and a RICO indictment requires that criminal conspiracy continue to within five years of the present. The government had to get around the statute of limitations, and that's where Corso came in.

Instead of going to jail for his theft, Corso agreed to wear a wire as he explored the underbelly of Las Vegas, like an amateur undercover agent equipped with a gambling-and-booze allowance. He wore his wire to the Crazy Horse Too strip club, where he clocked hundreds of hours, and he wore it when he was introduced to Lou Eppolito, who told him that he was looking for investors to back his latest screenplay ("Murder in Youngstown"). Corso, with some guidance from the F.B.I., conjured up four "Hollywood punks" who he said were coming to town, and who might be interested in financing the movie. The catch: they needed to be shown a good time—they wanted some "designer drugs." Eppolito put Corso in touch with his son Anthony, who is twenty-four, and with a friend of Anthony's named Guido Bravatti ("the Guidster," Corso called him), who was helping Steve Caracappa's wife with computer lessons. Last February, Bravatti and Anthony Eppolito sold an ounce of crystal meth and half a dozen Ecstasy pills to Corso. The statute of limitations, according to the prosecution, was now irrelevant, because the alleged conspiracy that had begun in 1986 was ongoing.

For this—for the high-tech entrapment, and the use of Eppolito's son—Hayes later called Corso "the worst kind of pig," worse even than a confessed killer who had already testified. (To further emphasize the cultural divide, Hayes referred to the setup as having involved "this speed drug, that's good for sex drive, or something.")

"He was my first patient."

• •

Since the defendants never took the stand, it was Corso's wire that provided the jurors, who were equipped with headphones, with their only taste of Eppolito's conversational gifts. This snippet was recorded over dinner at a casino restaurant:

> Let me talk to you the way the Jews do it. There is no better way. The Jews say, "You're Jewish, you're Jewish, he's Jewish, he's Jewish, there's four of us, that's a quarter each, we all make a quarter." Italians do it, "I want sixty-five cents. I'll give you a dime, I'll give him three cents, give him seven, but I make sure I get the most." . . . Jews don't care, because there'll be another dollar, and there'll be *another* dollar. "We have four dollars, we each make a dollar." . . . Italians aren't like that. Italian people, for some reason, and I don't know the reason why, they almost feel, "How am I getting fucked? *Where* am I getting fucked?" It's, like, their assholes are always puckered.

Corso brought out the best in Cutler, who implicated technology in the societal breakdown responsible for putting a man like Corso on the witness stand.

"Do you know how to use those fancy computer machines?" Cutler asked.

"Somewhat, yes."

He kept pressing. "You know how to use the e-mail?"

"Yes."

Cutler approached and handed Corso a stack of printouts, then employed the Puzzler.

"There is communication in the electronic world between you and Lou, is that the idea?"

"They are e-mails."

At another point, after naming some of Corso's victims, and the amounts he had stolen from them, Cutler said, "You stole for the *worst* reasons: indifference, callousness, profligacy, greed."

Judge Weinstein interrupted: "Is that a question?"

"Yes, sir," Cutler replied, sliding into the Backward Stumbling Buddha, holding it for a moment, and then lifting his head to look at Corso. "Are those adjectives apt?"

"It's been an amazing experience," Lou Eppolito, Jr., who is thirty-six, and works at a vitamin warehouse in New Jersey, told me after court one day in the second week of the trial. "I'm trying to stay optimistic, but it's going a little worse than I thought. I'm trying to prepare myself for the guilty verdict right now."

Eppolito, Sr., who is fifty-seven but could pass for seventy, has long since lost his weight-lifter's build; he is hugely fat and jowly. His hair, in the past year, has gone completely gray, to match his pallor. Still, he seemed to be weathering the trial without great difficulty, settling into a regular routine and even maintaining a limited code of chivalry during what seemed more and more likely to be his last days as a free man. He wore the same gray suit almost every day, and made sure to smile at the courtroom sketch artist and exchange pleasantries with the photographers who gathered in Cadman Plaza, across the street, to shoot pictures of him and Fran as they lumbered across to their lunch, at the same back table of the same restaurant, the Park Plaza Diner. He held doors for women, and on one occasion even bent down, with considerable effort, to pick up a dropped scarf for a stranger.

Lou, Jr., was excluded from the family lunchtime ritual. (Fran and her kids do not speak to him.) "We've had problems in the past, and they're holding on to that," he said. So he clung to chance encounters in the hall, during breaks, in order to speak with his father, about whom he is now attempting to write a book.

"Throughout our life, we've butted heads," Eppolito, Jr., said to me. "But I told him, 'I'm not out to get you.' I'm kind of following in his footsteps, in a way."

Ed Hayes presented an optimistic front in his own daily routines, which included reminding reporters of the small victories he'd scored on recent cross-examinations (exposing a previously unknown money-laundering scheme that Burt Kaplan had set up in Antigua, say, or calling attention to a missing homicide file), and requesting that they acknowledge how well dressed he was. "Yesterday I did not feel was a good day for them," he said of the prosecutors, as he did almost every day, when I joined him for lunch at the diner in the middle of week two.

Hayes has just written a book, "Mouthpiece: A Life in—and Sometimes Just Outside—the Law," in which he lays out his theory of "the neighborhood white boy," and says that "you're a fool if you operate in the court system or anywhere else without a keen sense of ethnic identity." He talks about his boyhood among the Irish in Jackson Heights, where the chief rule was "that the worst thing you can do is rat out a friend." And he explains, at considerable length, the role that tailors and, especially, cobblers have played in insuring his success. ("Anyone can dress well up top; shoes make the man.")

As he ate, he expounded on the ethnic idea. "It was a much different Police Department then, a lot of Irish and Italian officers," he said. "Now it's eighteen per cent Hispanic, a lot of African-Americans. Back then, the guys came from the neighborhoods, and they knew a lot of the crime guys. When I was a D.A. in homicide, I loved it. All the cops were from my background."

A little girl walked up to our booth and pointed at Hayes, who was dressed in a brown-and-blue pin-striped suit, with his fedora at his side. He looked like a character out of a colorized forties movie. "Funny man!" she said.

Hayes has built his career on a network of trading favors, representing the kinds of people—cops and journalists, largely—who are apt to be able to help him in return. "I see myself more like an Irish politician of another era," he said. "I take care of the people in my building. When I've been in trouble, my friends have been a great help. My friends stuck with me like fucking glue."

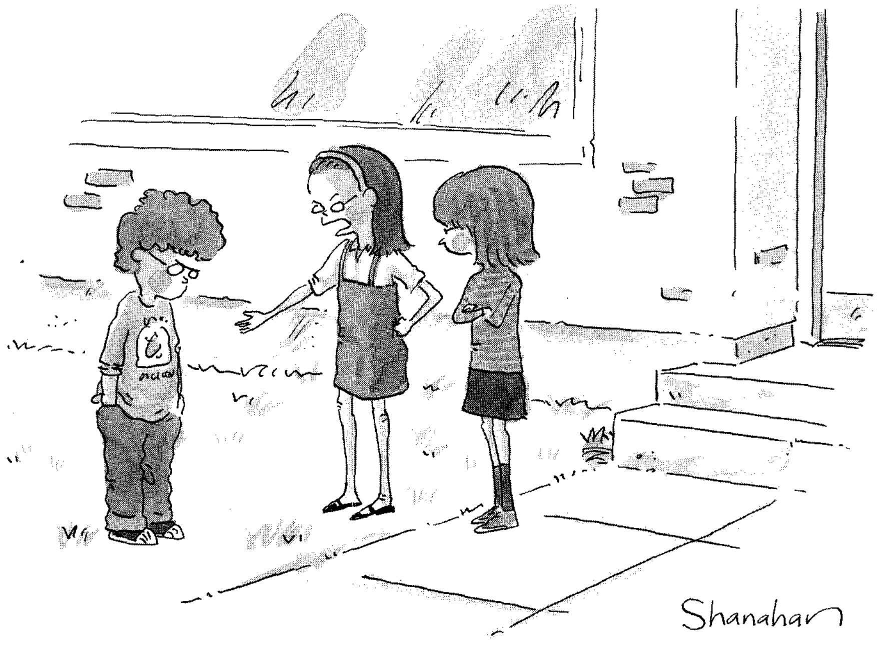
One such friend is Ray Kelly, the Police Commissioner, with whom he used to have lunch regularly. This case was straining their relationship, however, and he said he hadn't eaten with Kelly since the defendants' arrest, last spring.

As we waited in line to pay, by the exit, an investigator from the U.S. Attorney's office admired Hayes's brown overcoat. "It's Polo," Hayes said. "I get 'em cheap, because I represent all those guys."

Hayes held the door for a woman who appeared to be in her forties, and who thanked him before adding, "I like your hat. I wish more men still wore hats."

We caught up to Lou and Fran Eppolito, crossing the park, and chatted as we entered the courthouse. Moments later, as the four of us—Fran, Lou, Ed, and I—were waiting for the elevator, Eppolito blurted out, "Excuse me, gentlemen, I don't mean any offense," and began very demonstrably adjusting his crotch. I was reminded of Rosario Gambino, outside the Café Italia, in 1983, and Eppolito's choke hold.

However betrayed Eppolito may have felt by the supposed "thin blue line" during his corruption hearing, in the eighties, he seemed to be benefitting from another cop code—the Blue Wall of Silence—this time around. Someone close to the prosecution complained to me that several of the officers who did testify had initially been more forthcoming about their knowledge of the defendants' activities, only to take the stand and reveal little, and then shake Eppolito's or Cutler's hand on the way out.



"What'll it be, Tyler—your lunch money or heaps of verbal abuse?"

"Most people think they're dirty," one current detective told me, describing the feeling among the cops. But, he added, "there's a general attitude of just enjoying the spectacle."

The spectacle, as the trial progressed, was certainly hard to ignore. We saw Eppolito's onetime mistress, Cabrini Cama, take the stand, wearing bangs and big, magenta-colored hair, just as she might have had when, as she testified, Lou and Steve and Burt Kaplan used to visit her at her house in Bensonhurst. (Fran Eppolito shot a disapproving look at Cama's several-inch-high heels as she passed by.) There were sentimental moments, too. Pictures from the Sweet Sixteen party of Frank Santora's daughter were shown on a big screen: of Lou Eppolito, looking much healthier, lighting candles and dancing with the birthday girl; of a younger Fran Eppolito, with blond hair, which brought a wistful smile to the defendant's otherwise dour wife.

The more time you spent in the courthouse, the smaller New York's underworld came to seem. Early on, Burt Kaplan, the sickly star witness, revealed that he once had Murray Cutler—Bruce's father—as a defense attorney. The judge in that case was Jack Weinstein. In 1973, Kaplan's twelve-year-old daughter, Deborah, stood before Weinstein and pleaded for leniency on her father's behalf in a larceny sentencing. (Kaplan got four years, with a recommendation for early parole.) Deborah Kaplan is now a judge in Manhattan, and when her father was asked why he had jeopardized her career by inviting known gangsters like Anthony Casso and Frank Santora to her wedding, in 1985, he replied, "She might have become a criminal-defense lawyer." By the time a minor witness named Thomas Licata mentioned in passing, during the third week, that he'd had a high-school job, in the seventies, at the Toys R Us on Flatbush Avenue—the one with the parking lot where Jimmy Hydell later arrived, in the trunk, to meet his fate at the hands of Anthony Casso—the coincidence hardly seemed surprising.

Steve Caracappa, who is sixty-four and trim, with a well-groomed mustache, was the cipher in the trial. He avoided all encounters with the press, never leaving the courthouse for lunch, and what little we learned of him from testimony—that he was a cat person; that he hand-delivered conciliatory cookies to Burt Kaplan after a falling-out between Kaplan and Eppolito—did not suggest that he was a likely killer. He was, by all accounts, smart and competent, rising to the élite Major Case Squad. And yet it was Caracappa's apparent sloppiness that produced the trial's saddest testimony.

In November of 1986, records show, Caracappa ran a computer search on the name Nicholas Guido, and turned up the address, in Brooklyn's Windsor Terrace neighborhood, of a young man born on February 2, 1960. A month later, on Christmas Day, Guido, a twenty-six-year-old phone-company employee who'd recently put in for a job with the Fire Department, stepped outside to show his uncle his new, bright-red Nissan Maxima—and was shot to death in a drive-by.

Nicholas Guido was also the name of a Gambino associate who had failed in an assassination attempt on Anthony Casso. That Nicky Guido was born on January 29, 1957, and lived a couple of miles away. When news of the Christmas shooting got out, he fled to Florida.

The killing of the Windsor Terrace Guido, to borrow from Paul Castellano, was a bad thing done wrong—tragically wrong. After Guido's mother, Pauline Pepitone, appeared and testified that she'd given her son a gold Christ head as a gift on that fateful day, Judge Weinstein excused the jury and admonished the prosecution. "I don't want witnesses like this brought in the case unnecessarily," he said.

Weinstein, who was appointed to the bench by Lyndon Johnson in 1967, moved the trial along briskly, twice cutting Cutler's crosses short, and expressing exasperation with the government's attempts to narrate a "history of organized crime." His age and experience belied his distaste for pomp. Weinstein never once wore a robe, and when Cutler asked his permission to approach a witness on the opening day, he replied, "Yes. You need not ask."

CUTLER: O.K., sir. I need not ask?

JUDGE: Correct. You don't need my permission.

CUTLER: Oh, yes, sir. It's the old-fashioned way, Your Honor. I don't want to take liberties.

JUDGE: We don't do it that way anymore.

The most graphic testimony came from the prosecution's thirtieth witness, an illiterate fifty-six-year-old man named Peter Franzone, who stood just five feet four. Franzone testified that he'd dropped out of P.S. 9, in Crown Heights, at the age of sixteen, at which point he was still in the sixth grade.

Franzone had once, as a boy, taken sixty-five dollars from a recycling plant, with which he treated himself to a cowboy hat on Coney Island, and when he was fourteen or fifteen he stole a car, but the story of his life was mainly one of hard, honest work: he drove a laundry truck, and then a tow truck, eventually managing to buy his own towing company, auto-body shop, and parking lot, on Nostrand Avenue. After leaving the business, Franzone took a maintenance job with the city, which he worked at for seventeen years, without taking a day off. He retired, last year, with two hundred and fifty-four unused sick days; he had continued receiving a full city salary until a week before his testimony began.

One of the regular customers at Franzone's lot on Nostrand Avenue was Eppolito's cousin Frank Santora. Sometime in the winter of 1986, Franzone testified, Santora showed up with two men—one in "a skullcap," the other in a trenchcoat—and the three headed inside a garage, to Santora's usual parking spot. Franzone recalled seeing Eppolito parked near the entrance, and he said that, about half an hour later, only two men—Santora and the man in the trenchcoat—emerged from the garage.

Soon afterward, Santora told Franzone that he had something to show him:

Q: And you talked about what you saw when you got into the garage and you turned on the light. What happened next?

A: Saw the man leaning on the wall, and Frankie told me that I got to help bury the body, because I'm an accessory with it, and if I didn't help him, if I go and tell anybody, that he would kill me and my effin' family.

Santora pulled two shovels out of the trunk of his car and ordered Franzone to start digging a hole, in an unpaved portion of the garage floor. He dug for hours, five feet down. "I was afraid that he might make me dig it deep enough and leave me in there," Franzone said.

> Q: And was it after he was in the hole that you put the cement on him? What was the sequence after the man gets put in the hole?
>
> A: Put the man in the hole—the man was like this—and Frankie put the lime on top of him, and then dumped that, and he opened the jugs and poured the jugs of liquid on him and told me to go get water . . . and we started mixing up the cement and then we pushed the cement in the hole.
>
> Q: And what happened next?
>
> A: Then I threw dirt on top of him.

It was dark when they finished, and Franzone went home and never told anyone—not even his wife—about what had happened. A year later, he had a son, and Santora dropped by with a gift: baby clothes, in a black garbage bag. In 1988, Franzone attended Santora's daughter's Sweet Sixteen party, and recognized Eppolito's cop friend as the man in the trenchcoat. He said nothing.

Last March, following the arrest of Eppolito and Caracappa, an F.B.I. agent came calling, with questions about Frank Santora. Franzone looked in the Yellow Pages for a lawyer. He stopped his search at "Abramson, Alan." In April, Franzone took the police back to the lot, where they exhumed the remains of Israel Greenwald, an Orthodox Jew (the "skullcap" was a yarmulke) who had been involved in a bond-dealing scheme with Burt Kaplan twenty years earlier.

Hayes, in his cross-examination, addressed the matter of the trenchcoat: "Were these big lapels or were these small lapels, do you remember?" Then he retrieved a bright-red shovel he'd picked up at a hardware store ("Would it shock you if I told you that in my time I dug a lot of holes?"), and asked Franzone to step down from the witness stand. Using four plastic cups, he asked Franzone to map out the perimeter of the hole.

For the next five minutes, the two men pretended to dig a hole in the floor of the federal courthouse:

> Q: Mr. Franzone, you say the hole was a little over five foot deep?
>
> A: Yes.
>
> Q: The shovel is two and a half feet to three feet long?
>
> A: Yes.
>
> Q: That means if you dig down with the shovel, right?
>
> A: Yes.
>
> Q: By the way, you can't dig right through, you have to squat down?

"As I recall, you're the one who insisted on a conquistador-size mattress."

• •

> A: And drag it along the wall and throw it up.
>
> Q: You throw it up like that?
>
> A: Yes.

Bruce Cutler, who took over the questioning, has never met a coöperating witness who wasn't, in some way or another, the most shameful person on earth. Franzone, who is now in witness protection, was no exception.

For this questioning, Cutler adopted the Puzzler: "Did you ever call your wife and say, 'Dear, I won't be home for dinner, I'm digging a grave at my place of business?' " Then the Commander, with repeated slams for emphasis. "That's what you created in your collision shop—you created a cemetery! It's the most despicable, loathsome thing that a man could do—if he calls himself a man."

The defense contended—not implausibly—that Franzone had been more complicit in the Greenwald affair than he was letting on. But since Frank Santora is now dead, and therefore incapable of incriminating or contradicting Franzone or anyone else, it wasn't clear what Franzone would have stood to gain by falsely implicating the defendants.

It *was* clear, by this stage anyway, that the two sides were talking past one another, not even trying the same case, really. The prosecution, led by a forty-three-year-old Army Reserve lieutenant colonel

named Robert Henoch, who wore glasses and moved about the courtroom with a determined, almost cadenced gait, presented facts, bolstered by blown-up photographs and diagrams. The defense countered those facts with a world view.

The day the prosecution called its last witness, a Thursday, was unseasonably warm, and Bruce Cutler and Ed Hayes took a lunchtime stroll, eventually settling down to eat at a stone chessboard in Cadman Plaza—just a couple of neighborhood white boys, reminiscing.

"This is our first case together, would you believe it?" Cutler said. "I'm in Heaven. Freedom, fresh air, food: this, to me, right now, I'm in Heaven. A day's work, some exercise—it sounds silly, but it is true. Most of the heavy lifting is done."

Cutler said that he planned to handle the broad, thematic arguments, while leaving the factual matters to Hayes.

"It's been heavy," he continued. "It's been *heavy*. The pace has been *relentless*. I've never worked so hard in my life—as a lawyer. I've worked harder in construction work, and in the gym."

He opened a bag he'd brought from a nearby deli and retrieved a sandwich, while Hayes drank a smoothie. "Ed and I appreciate the small things," he said.

"I'd rather be doing this in Brooklyn than sitting in La Grenouille," Hayes said.

"The greatest lunches I've ever had were on construction gangs," Cutler said, holding up his sandwich. "Ham and Swiss."

He took a few bites and sat back, spreading his shoulders. "Eddie is more sanguine, more optimistic. I think there's been a moral breakdown in this country—in politics, in government, in *hoodlums*."

"You think the government is more deceitful now?" Hayes asked

"More powerful, yes," Cutler replied. "And you see it in sports, too—in college athletics. With certain exceptions, of course. Judge Weinstein is old school. He wrote the law. He built that building. Our clients are old school."

"The government, especially the Feds, they just tell you what they want to tell you," Hayes said.

"They've been denuding the so-called Mob of leadership. It has brought about a horrific gangland *opportunism* that has infiltrated every part of society."

"If you take the classical point of view, and look back to the Greeks and Romans, because I think, Bruce, those are the classical points of view," Hayes began, "in all these cases, senators were expected to make daily appearances at the gym. Governments today, they have no values. It's all taking power, making money."

"Franklin Roosevelt wasn't making money from the Second World War," Cutler said. "And President Wilson wasn't making money from the First World War. And Harry Truman wasn't profiting from Korea."

"The concept of the U.S., what this country was based on, was individual rights," Hayes said. "It's a big part of the American myth: cowboys, trial lawyers. You really find a war on that kind of thinking today, the myth of the individual. Thank God the jury can still look you in the eye and say, 'Go fuck yourself.' " He paused. "This is my idea of happiness."

"It's here," Cutler said.

"Everyone said, 'Don't take this case, they're dirty.' But you know what? I could never do the corporate life," Hayes said. "I do my own thing, what I want, and how I want. And I think we've made a very honest case."

A man walking by on the street recognized Hayes, and stopped. "Hey, Eddie, I'm reading your book," he called out. "How do you like my shoes?" He lifted his feet, one after the other, and presented them for inspection. "What do you think?

Cole Haan, out in East Hampton. . . .”

Hayes got up to shake the man's hand, and Cutler attempted to diagnose the decline. “It began in 1980, when Reagan took over, and when Giuliani was the U.S. Attorney in the Southern District, and brought an unprecedented war on the underworld. He used the RICO statutes to take out all the old-timers. All the acolytes and wanna-bes became people of note—”

Hayes, who had returned, cut back in: “Bruce, you don't think it's wrong that they broke the force of the Mafia, do you?”

“I can't say I see it as black-and-white as that, Eddie. There's a place for gambling. There's a place for *neighborhood*.”

Hayes moved over to a nearby bench, and played the devil's advocate for a moment. “Cops always tell you they're disillusioned with the world,” he said. “Well, I think the world's better off. Fifty years ago, we had Hitler and Stalin.”

“But, Ed, your Irish brethren aren't better off.”

“I *will* say that standards in public life are declining,” Hayes said. “And this adulation of celebrities is obscene.”

“But, Ed, some of them are true *artists*.”

A free-associative digression followed, touching on actors, politicians, and sports stars, and the value of single-sex prep schools and colleges.

“My point is, I don't want to seem like, as the New York *Times* fella says, ‘an apocalyptic aura,’” Cutler said. “I don't want to be *apocalyptic*, but there's a veneer of *disrespect*. I'm a romantic. Everybody today, they have no manners, they have no civility. They don't dress well. Every time people of this generation act civilized, I thank them up and down for being civilized.”

“You have to understand who both these guys are, our clients,” Hayes said. “Lou is a very, very strong guy. A *tough* guy. New York City was a *war zone* in the seventies. He's been in a lot of hand-to-hand combat. I think we have a shot, Bruce.”

“Ed, I feel better than that. Kaplan is the case. Don't lose sight of it. He is the case.”

Hayes took a call on his cell phone, from his daughter, and began pacing. Cutler finished his sandwich and retrieved another from the bag, this time taking only half. “I know I'm an outrageous anachronism,” he said. “I admit that. I'm a prima donna. I admit that. I've made some terrible mistakes in life, but I try to do the right thing. And, you know, I've got a son, but he's with his mother. In the end, I'm all by myself, and I have to live with *myself*, all alone.”

Hayes was using his BlackBerry, which led to the subject of e-mail, and computers. “It creates a cowardly individual that feels *empowered* when he puts on the machine,” Cutler said. “They don't test the *mettle* of the man. I read e-mails, and then I delete them. I can't type. I understand the usefulness of it. But I'd rather open up a dictionary or an encyclopedia. The effort of it—there's *effort* involved. I think effort pays off. The things you enjoy in life you ought to *savor* a little bit. You think a *love offer* is made on a computer screen? Your whole *life* is changed by love.”

He went on, now referring to a different kind of machine. “For instance, Turner Classic Movies is my favorite station. I *enjoy* them: ‘Bridge on the River Kwai,’ ‘Spartacus.’ My father took me to those as a boy. It's the same thing, Ed. Agony, suffering, and brutality, and triumph in the end. Freedom! And I don't mean that froufrou ‘Gladiator,’ with the Australian who got in a fight at the hotel. That ‘Gladiator’ movie is typical of these days. I'm talking about ‘Spartacus,’ with Kirk Douglas, a Jewish kid from Amsterdam, New York. Was on the wrestling team at St. Lawrence. ‘Spartacus.’ And his son Michael is a good actor as well. Much of trial work is theatre. I'm *emoting*. I'm transporting myself into the jury box.”

Hayes lay down on a park bench, placed his hat on his chest, and drifted off to sleep. Cutler continued his monologue. “The captain of the football team at Hamilton came to watch me. A lot of my friends have been showing up. Eddie's friends, too. I find out they're there, and I can't believe it. They *care*. It's *loyalty*. Part of this case has my whole professional life in it. I left the D.A.'s office in 1981. There's a lot of personal aspects to this case in me.” He mentioned John Gotti. “I equate John as a real stand-up true believer. He went to jail and died. It's like a homecoming for me. And there's Eddie, who I met in 1981. It's all coming back. There were more gangland killings from 1985 to 1992 than in the history of the country. Then it became almost a joke, a metaphor, and HBO came along: ‘The Sopranos.’ The actors, I know them, and they're great people, but what they're portraying is the *lowest* form of life. There's not a single redeeming character, not a single person with *respect*. Not even the psychiatrist—she doesn't have respect for herself. Except—that one Sicilian kid, with the ponytail, he had a little bit of respect, and then he went running back. They're just fat, *greedy*, foulmouthed *low-lifes*. The Sicilian kid—he had a crush on the wife, I think—he was the one character that I thought had a little dignity to him.” He paused. “And the Russian girl, who lost her leg, and who worked so hard.”

He named a few of his favorite books—“Freedom from Fear,” “When Pride Still Mattered,” “They Marched Into Sunlight.” Then he stood, grabbed his briefcase, and walked back into the courthouse, leaving Hayes behind, still sleeping.

The next day, the defense requested a mistrial. Gaspipe Casso, asserting his authority as the “official acting boss of the Luchese crime family,” had written a late-arriving letter to the U.S. Attorney's office from his cell in the ADX Supermax prison in Colorado, stating that “Detectives Eppolito and Caracappa have never supplied confidential information to the Lucheses,” and claiming to have exculpatory knowledge about some of the murders being charged. The letter also mentioned Casso's kindness to the prosecutors: “my three and a half years of phenomenal, substantial assistance.”

Casso had been following the trial in the newspapers, and was frustrated that he hadn't been included in the show. In a hastily arranged conference call with representatives of the defense team, he said, “I can't see how either attorney could honestly wholeheartedly cross-examine them people without speaking to me first and learning the truth.”

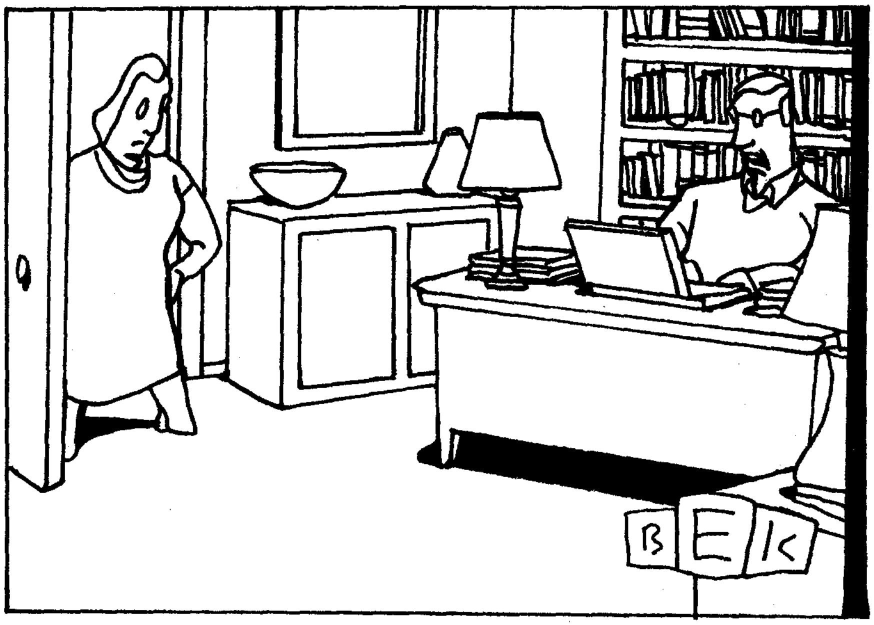
Casso said that he'd always had an F.B.I. agent feeding him information, but that the crooked cops he knew were from Suffolk County, not Brooklyn. “I wish youse luck,” he signed off, and, before the line disconnected, Eppolito spoke up:

"Anthony, this is Lou Eppolito. Thank you very much."

Judge Weinstein denied the mistrial—the attorneys had known for months of Casso's availability to testify—but offered the defense the option of changing its mind and calling Casso as a witness after all.

The problem with calling Casso as a defense witness, of course, was that he was a confessed rat and a proven liar. Cutler and Hayes, between them, had already referred to Casso as a "homicidal maniac" perhaps a dozen times in front of the jury.

JUDGE: What is your decision with respect to Mr. Casso?
HAYES: I'm not going to call Mr. Casso.
JUDGE: You are not going to call him?
HAYES: Yes.
JUDGE: Then both sides rest.



"I'm frustrated because I wish I were criticizing greater things."

• •

Daniel Wenner, the youngest of the three prosecutors, at thirty-four, summarized the government's exhaustive evidence, from thirty-eight State's witnesses, using PowerPoint slides and plasma TV screens. Judge Weinstein spotted a few closed eyes in the jury box at about the midpoint, and requested a stretching session.

"Rats," a former prosecutor told me, are "the central engine that drives the justice system." Without them, prosecuting gangs and organized-crime families would be impossible. It is therefore received wisdom in the legal community that all defense summations in Mafia trials are exactly the same. When boiled down, they amount to little more than questioning the motive—and therefore the honesty—of rats.

But there are many ways to impugn a rat. "When you go home tonight, visualize those ten-year-old kids and six-year-old kids in Upper Volta who have ringworm," Ed Hayes said, by way of blaming Burt Kaplan for Third World poverty. (There were just two neighborhood white guys on the jury, in the end, and Hayes confided to me that he'd noticed the black jurors' faces light up whenever he talked about Kaplan's dealings in African "blood diamonds," which he linked to the present civil war in Liberia.)

Cutler began his summation with a dictionary: a 2,072-page American Heritage Fourth Edition. He defined "justice," "Martin Luther King," "spring" ("because we had a little window of spring that came"), and "hope," all in the course of working his way to "Franzone."

"I looked up the definition of 'Franzone' in the dictionary, where I start all my work," he said. "I didn't look up his name but I looked up 'gnome': G-N-O-M-E." Pete Franzone, the diminutive gravedigger, was "one of a race of dwarflike creatures who live underground and guard treasure hoards."

Stephen Corso, on the other hand, was more like a coyote—there'd been a coyote on the loose in Central Park recently—and Eppolito a duck, the unsuspecting prey, lulled into a false sense of security in his natural habitat.

Cutler cited a number of facts, too: that he'd lost fourteen and a half pounds during the trial; that Brooklyn was "the borough of churches"; that construction on the Brooklyn Bridge began in 1869 and concluded in 1883; that Lou Eppolito's picture once hung on the walls of Chinese restaurants; that "Crazy Horse" referred not only to a strip club visited by Stephen Corso but to "one of the great American Indian warriors of all times."

Finally, he brought up the testimony of Agent Luzak, the arresting officer in Nevada, and that brief exchange with Eppolito. " 'It's been a long time coming.' And Lou's answer was 'I know.' I know. I know what the life of my father was like. I know what the life of my uncle was like. I know what the lives of my cousins were like. . . . I know you have been after me. I know what happened as a result of my book. Come and take me." He adopted the Receiver. "He is in your hands."

Hayes saw the verdict coming. He'd seen the way the individual jurors avoided looking in his eyes when they asked for testimony to be read aloud by the court stenographer. And when they all broke for a long lunch on the second day—Judge Weinstein was due to give a speech on capital punishment at Brooklyn Law School—Hayes shook his head nervously and said, "You win some, and you lose some. And you know what? If they did it, that's the life they chose."

Anthony Eppolito clutched one of his dad's plaques as the jury foreperson—a middle-aged black woman—stood, at ten past two, and quietly spoke the word "proved" seventy times: guilty on all counts.

As the verdict was read, Cutler rested his left elbow on the table and propped his head up with his hand. Without realizing it, perhaps, he had his middle finger extended, and facing the jury box, while the others curled under at the knuckle. He sniffled once or twice, and finally drew a finger to the side of his eye, mopping up.

Hayes stood and shook Caracappa's hand. He kissed Eppolito on both cheeks. And then he broke down in tears. ♦

LETTER FROM POLYNESIA

BIRTH OF A NATION?

A speck in the South Pacific ponders independence.

BY IAN PARKER

The islands that make up the territory of Tokelau are so tiny and remote—and distant even from one another—that their civil servants work out of a more convenient country. Tokelau, a colony of New Zealand in the South Pacific, not far from where the international date line crosses the equator, has offices in Samoa, thirty or so hours away by boat. Although quite small itself, Samoa has a number of things that Tokelau lacks, including an airstrip, a harbor, private enterprise, broadcast television, tourism, cars, dogs, hills, and soil.

One wet, hot morning in February, a few days before Tokelau's sixteen hundred people were to decide, in an unusual referendum, whether or not to remain New Zealand's property, I went, without an appointment, to the building in Apia, Samoa's capital, where much of Tokelau's bureaucracy works. The office was in a bungalow set several feet downhill from a residential road. The rain that day was unrelenting. I walked through the front door into a room apparently emptied of its staff, where, beneath two slowly spinning fans, the desks and filing cabinets were oddly askew. Soggy box files had been piled into a kind of campfire heap on the floor. Everything was damp and stained, unlike the three bright-blue maps of Tokelau's three atolls that I could see hanging on a wall through a doorway: outlines traced in coral of mountains that have disappeared. (An atoll forms when, over time, coral grows at the perimeter of a shrinking volcano, leaving a skinny strip of land—usually broken up into small islets—around a lagoon. A map of an atoll looks like an argument that the sea has almost won.)

A man appeared from the back of the building and introduced himself as Alan Shaw, the general financial manager of Tokelau—in effect, its secretary of the treasury. Although almost every resident of Tokelau is Polynesian, Shaw was born in Glasgow. His reddish mustache forms three gloomy sides of a rectangle.

"I think we need a new office," he said, in a Scottish accent. Rain had collected in the hollow where the office was built, and two nights ago it had risen enough to wash over the desktops. The floodwater had just begun to recede, after seeping into the office safe to dampen part of Tokelau's national reserves. Shaw later showed me blocks of banknotes, dripping through misted plastic.

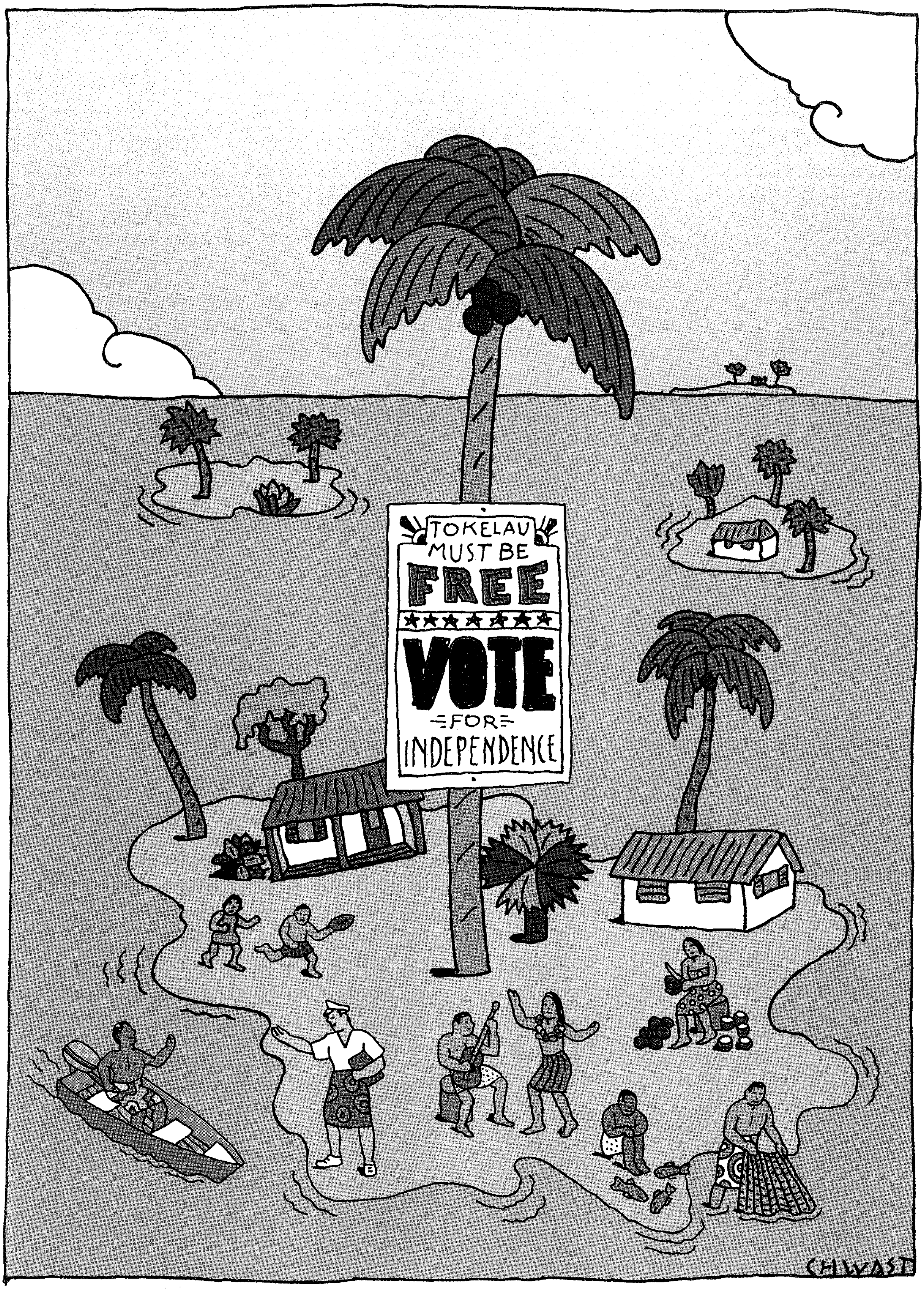
We went out to the front porch, and, against the sound of rain falling on corrugated iron, talked about Tokelau's referendum. On February 11th, Shaw explained, a chartered ferry would carry two ballot boxes and a few dozen officials and observers from Samoa to Tokelau's atolls: Atafu, Nukunonu, and Fakaofo. Each atoll is made up of dozens of islands, but, for reasons of social unity, people live on only one or two islands, leaving the rest uninhabited. A delegation carrying the boxes would visit a village a day—a three-day trip in total—and then a result would be announced and the boat would return. Either Tokelau would take a step toward nationhood—by adopting a new constitution and signing a new treaty with New Zealand—or it would not. Shaw said that he had been due to go on this voyage, but now he had to stay in Samoa to help clear up the flood mess. He was disappointed to miss an important moment in Tokelauan history; at the same time, he knew that the long sea journey could be punishing, especially at this time of year, the cyclone season. He recommended a brand of seasickness tablet.

"Economically, Tokelau shouldn't exist," Shaw said, without disparagement. He described his job: he balances the books of a minute territory, spread over a hundred miles, which has its own language and culture but almost no earned income, and receives most of its seven-million-dollar annual budget from the New Zealand government. We looked down the street through the rain. I asked him about the size of the main island of Fakaofo, the Tokelau atoll that has historically regarded itself as dominant, and where, if I joined the referendum boat, I might be spending the most time. Shaw pointed through the rain. "You see from here?" he said. "Count the telephone poles: one, two, three, four. O.K., from here to there."

The United Nations, in its charter of 1945, identified a category of territory that it tactfully called "non-self-governing." The following year, it published a list of seventy-two such places, ranging from island specks in the Pacific and the Caribbean to large colonial possessions in Africa and Asia. The charter made quite modest demands on the countries that ran the territories. But the U.N. grew sharper in its anti-colonial spirit, as it was joined by member states that had themselves just shaken off colonial control, and in 1960 the General Assembly passed a declaration that called for "immediate steps" to be taken "to transfer all powers to the peoples of those territories." To monitor implementation, the U.N. formed a committee whose name, when spoken by anyone familiar with it, is usually preceded by a theatrical gulp of breath: the Special Committee on the Situation with Regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. It is more often known as the Special Committee.

During the rapid decolonization of the world, in the nineteen-sixties and seventies, numerous territories became independent—Kenya, Angola, the Bahamas—and were crossed from the list of the Special Committee. By the time the U.N.'s International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism had begun, in 1991, the list of "non-self-governing" territories was down to seventeen, most of them small islands that did not match any popular notion of what it was to be held in im-

SEYMOUR CHWAST


TOKELAU
MUST BE
FREE
VOTE
FOR
INDEPENDENCE
CHWAST

One of Tokelau's main islands is the size of one and a half Ikeas; in school sports, a "marathon" is eight hundred metres.

perial shackles. At the end of the decade, the same seventeen remained: the British territories of Anguilla, Bermuda, the British Virgin Islands, the Cayman Islands, the Falkland Islands, Gibraltar, Montserrat, the Pitcairn Islands, St. Helena, and the Turks and Caicos Islands; two American possessions, Guam and American Samoa; two disputed territories, Western Sahara and East Timor; France's Pacific islands of New Caledonia; and Tokelau, which Britain had claimed as a protectorate in 1877 and passed to New Zealand's control fifty years later.

The only victory that the committee has had since 1990 is East Timor, which was deleted from the list in 2002. Robert Aisi, Papua New Guinea's Ambassador to the U.N., and a current Special Committee member, recently told me that U.N. colleagues sometimes ask, "The committee's not still *meeting*, is it?" While factions within some unlisted territories, such as Puerto Rico, lobby to be noticed, some listed territories lobby to be left alone. "It's fight, fight, fight," Aisi said. "Gibraltans come and throw rocks at us."

Through the years, members of the committee—which today includes representatives from Iran, Syria, and Cuba—set their hopes on Tokelau, eying the islands with the avidity of a drunk watching a slow-moving barman pour his cocktail. It was certainly hard to imagine Tokelau, which has less than five square miles of land, as a fully independent state: not only would it be the world's second smallest in population, after the Vatican; it would be one of the lowest in elevation, for Tokelau's highest point is a mere fifteen feet. (Imagine a man standing on the beach on a stepladder.) All the same, the U.N. saw Tokelau as ripe for some degree of decolonization, not least because New Zealand had willingly shed three other possessions, in the nineteen-sixties and seventies. Western Samoa—now Samoa—became an independent state, whereas Niue and the Cook Islands became "self-governing in free-association": that is, they arrived at a kind of adolescent version of nationhood, with substantial autonomy but no seat in the U.N. General Assembly.

The Special Committee made five official mission visits to Tokelau between 1976 and 2002, more than to any other listed territory. (I caught a glimpse of one of these visits on an old Super-8 film, in which the misery of an Iranian delegate, a non-swimmer, his head poking tortoise-like from the top of a very large life vest, is unmistakable.) These delegations were received with courtesy by Tokelau's political leadership, which is made up of a small inter-atoll parliament and, on each atoll, a village council and an elected head, a *faipule*. (To preserve the political equality of the three atolls, the post of national leader, or *ulu*, rotates annually among the three *faipules*.) But the prospect of constitutional change was at first met with little excitement. Patuki Isaako, a former *ulu*, recently gave a speech in which he characterized the local reaction: "Thank you for coming, have a good time, but we are happy to stay as we are."

Over the years, as U.N. delegates continued to visit Tokelau, and as New Zealand increasingly devolved power on Tokelauans, some enthusiasm for independence emerged. Pio Tuia, the present *faipule* of Nukunonu, a charismatic man with a knack for speechmaking, allied himself closely with the idea of self-determination, as did Falani Aukuso, the head of the Tokelauan civil service, whom one diplomat described as "the power behind the throne" of Tokelau politics. Other islanders remained more circumspect. Not long ago, when Isaako addressed a Special Committee seminar in Papua New Guinea, he asked, "Why would we want to declare to the international community we have self-determination? . . . Is it going to feed our mouths? Is it going to feed our children?"

Last year, Tokelau's parliament voted to hold a referendum: citizens would be asked to chose between the status quo and a level of self-determination that would preserve New Zealand's financial support but grant Tokelau formal control of its affairs and the chance to speak for itself internationally. So, for example, Tokelau would take a seat at the Pacific Islands Forum, a key regional body; and it would for the first time have a flag, a national anthem, and a national symbol. (In advance of the vote, public competitions for these emblems had been announced.) As Pio Tuia said at a U.N. meeting in New York last June, "Behold, the seas are shimmering with the dawning of the new day. The big fish is about to surface. The journey's end is near."

"We've been over this before—you're too young to feel emasculated."

The referendum group gathered on a rainy Saturday evening at a quay in Apia, in the shadow of a bare-bones blue-and-white ferry, the Lady Naomi. Among those present was Neil Walter, the Administrator of Tokelau. His title promises an imperial flurry of swords and plumage, but he was wearing chinos and Velcro sandals. He is a fit, straight-backed man in his early sixties, a senior diplomat who has served as New Zealand's Ambassador in Indonesia and in Japan. In the nineteen-seventies and eighties, he had positions working for Tokelau; a few years ago, he took the job of Administrator, wanting to "take a crack" at shepherding the islands to self-determination. He lives and works in Wellington, two thousand miles away.

Walter has a gracious manner, and he made self-deprecating jokes about his own seaworthiness as he moved through the damp, sticky group, which included Falani Aukuso, the civil-service chief, a muscular man with cropped hair and a self-contained manner; Robert Aisi, the U.N. Ambassador from Papua New Guinea, an almost boyish lawyer in his late forties; and Tony Angelo, a New Zealand law professor, who had helped draw up the referendum's constitutional package. With them were U.N. vote monitors and development workers, various Tokelauan and New Zealand officials, and half a dozen reporters from New Zealand's daily press, including one who had written a column with the hyperbolic headline "THE U.N.'S MISGUIDED PLAN TO CUT TOKELAU ADRIFT." This commentary and others like it had spread the thought—seemingly made for broad satire—that Tokelau's vote on self-determination had been imposed from overseas. As a result, the foreigners involved in the process were minimizing their roles as agitators, and pitching the referendum as a primarily Tokelauan initiative. Still, Walter had admitted to me, in a jokey way that illustrated the political trickiness of the moment, that Tokelau had nothing close to a liberation movement. "I'd be glad of an independence firebrand, frankly," he said.

We watched the Lady Naomi, which is a hundred and fifty feet long, being loaded with cargo for Tokelauans, including office chairs, building materials, carrots, and a tricycle. This was a referendum run, but local freight, and a few Tokelau residents, had taken spare space on board. The mood on the quay was festive. Territories have at times shied away from independence—Bermudans, for example, rejected the idea in a 1995 referendum. But, in Tokelau's case, the modest nature of the autonomy plan, as well as the fastidious consultation that had led up to it, had created confidence that, as required, a two-thirds majority would vote "yes." One of the last things loaded on the Lady Naomi was a case of champagne.

It was dark when we boarded the ferry, and mid-evening when we left the pier and crashed into the open sea, heading in the direction of Atafu, which is three hundred miles north of Samoa. (The other atolls are a little closer—Nukunonu is sixty miles southeast of Atafu, and Fakaofo forty miles southeast of that.) Short of buying a seaplane, or a fair-sized yacht, the only way to make this journey is on one of two boats, which sail on an uncertain schedule—about twice a month. And it is also only on these boats, when they come, that anyone can travel between the atolls. Of the two ships, one is small and has almost no shelter against rain and spray. "Technically, it meets the safety criteria," Walter told me. The other, the Lady Naomi, is larger and has some indoor space, but it was built for short hauls; when the Lady Naomi sails to Tokelau, it's as if the ferry to Weehawken had changed course for France.

In the open Pacific, it soon became hard to remain standing. The Tokelauan residents tried to make themselves comfortable by lying across orange plastic seating bolted to the deck outdoors, whereas members of the referendum party had access to a small, air-conditioned cafeteria. But, with ketchup bottles falling to their sides, vacation high spirits soon dissipated, and most people clattered down a metal staircase to take a bunk in one of two communal, sour-smelling cabins. I didn't see Neil Walter again for thirty hours. He has never been what New Zealanders call "a good sailor." When he travels to Tokelau, his policy is to lie down, close his eyes, and not move or talk or eat until arriving.

Weeks before, New Zealand had sent cardboard ballot boxes to the referendum office in Samoa. These had looked too flimsy for Tokelau's high humidity—let alone its surf—so wooden replacements had been ordered. But there had been a miscommunication about size, and Samoan carpenters had delivered two heavy varnished chests, finished with what looked like coffin handles. As a result, although Tokelau's registered electorate amounted to fewer than seven hundred people, there was space in the boxes for tens of thousands of ballot papers—indeed, for a few of the voters themselves.

But the boxes had a fine symbolic presence, and it was rousing to see them reappear on deck in the weak light of dawn on Monday—and not only because they announced the end of the three-hundred-mile journey in rough seas, with a crew that loudly sang pre-dawn hymns in Samoan through the public-address system. The weather had now grown calm, and Tokelau was in front of us. We were moored about a quarter of a mile from the village on the atoll of Atafu, which fills one thin, boomerang-shaped island in a loop of fifty or so islands. (The other islands that we could see were smaller, some with space for only one or two cartoon shipwreck survivors.) Our view of the village was of a strip of pale beach, a dense straight line of palm trees above that, and open sky above. Nothing was higher than a tree growing on the beach, and I felt that an athlete would stand a chance of throwing a tennis ball right over the island, into the lagoon beyond.

Half a dozen decorated wooden canoes came out to meet the Lady Naomi. On the beach, about thirty women stood a few feet apart in a line, dressed in long white skirts and white shirts; they had begun an almost lethargically gentle dance, in which long sticks were crossed and uncrossed over their heads. Neil Walter, a veteran of Tokelauan welcomes—which, perhaps uniquely in this region, are never performed in front of Australian tourists eating a buffet dinner—was clearly impressed. "I wasn't expecting the canoes," he said.

An open aluminum tender pulled alongside the Lady Naomi. After the ballot boxes and the passengers were handed down onto the boat, it skidded toward shore on the crest of a small wave, arriving at a partly submerged short pier. The senior members of the party were invited to sit, in turn, on a plastic garden chair atop a door-size plank of wood, which was lifted to waist level by four men. They were then carried, like Victorian explorers, onto the beach, a few yards away, and floral garlands were placed on their heads.

As we stepped into the quiet of the village, it was as if a door had closed behind us. Besides having no cars, Tokelau also has no dogs, cattle, or horses—and bicycles make little sense on the rough coral pathways. Atafu does have one small flatbed truck, and, when a boat unloads, it takes cargo from the beach to someplace that is fairly close to the beach. There are also a few all-terrain quad bikes. But now, in the shade of breadfruit trees, there was no sound of these vehicles, or of anything but a cockerel and the crunch of unsteady feet on the coral gravel. I was told that a small brass hunting horn, hanging on a hook near the village offices, was powerful enough to summon Atafu's whole population.

Tokelau has electricity, as well as land-line telephones, outboard motors, and flush toilets; but there are no cafés or restaurants, no signs, and no lawnmowers. The island had no evidence of poverty, and little of the flotsam of industrialization that washes over everywhere: the Coke advertisements and old tires. We walked through the grid of Atafu's single-story homes, painted in blues and turquoises that evoke the color of the lagoon; they are primarily one large main room on a solid concrete foundation, and domestic sounds carry through floor-to-ceiling louvred windows. The village felt like a shaded seaside campsite in midsummer.

The atoll's residents were to start voting in an hour. We walked to the atoll's traditional *fale*—an open-sided village meeting hall—to listen to a round of speechmaking. Much of the village was gathered, in crisp Sunday dress; many of the locals were wearing floral crowns, too. In the front row sat the village head and the council of village elders, a body that is usually referred to in English as the "gray-hairs." Falani Aukuso interpreted in Tokelauan, a Polynesian language similar to Samoan, and in English, as Iosua Faamaoni, the pastor of Atafu's one church, which is Congregational, declared that "change" is "the womb from which all progress is born." (In the nineteenth century, the atoll's residents were converted by missionaries.) Faamaoni wore a bright-white jacket and a formal white version of Tokelau's ubiquitous sarong, the lavalava. Walter, sitting crosslegged, spoke soon afterward, and he noted that, among the benefits of a "yes" vote, "other countries would formally recognize Tokelau as a country, and be prepared to offer assistance and support." In the days to come, this paradoxical argument—that a vote for self-determination would expand the reach of Tokelau's dependency—was commonly expressed by "yes" voters, but it never sounded any less odd.

When Robert Aisi, the Papua New Guinean, spoke, he pointed out that he'd been to the islands once before, in 2004. "I said then that Tokelau was like a canoe, and all of us were paddling the canoe of Tokelau," he said. "Self-government is like you're paddling your own canoe. The choice is yours, and we will respect it. If you decide to become self-governing, we will respect it; if you decide not to do that, we will be there to paddle the canoe with you." Aisi's language introduced a troublesome notion: sudden solo paddling. Wouldn't most Tokelauans choose to have as many paddlers as possible, in a place where canoeing has historically carried great risks, and where it has now been abandoned, for all but ceremonial purposes, in favor of outboard motors? (In Tokelau, aluminum boats are guided at high speeds, through barely submerged coral beds, by languid young men who are as coolly removed from the act of driving as are Italian teen-agers on Vespas.)

In a large circular room, decorated with a garishly colored tapestry of Leonardo's "Last Supper," Tokelauans began casting ballots. I introduced myself to Lameka Sale, Atafu's Tokelauan-born and Fiji-trained doctor, who was walking to his clinic, still wearing one of the floral crowns. To his suppressed delight, Sale had been called to treat a member of the Lady Naomi's crew. The patient, when we reached him, was lying on an examination bed, wearing wraparound sunglasses. There was a cut on the sailor's leg, and Sale poked at it in a leisurely way, as if shopping for meat. Two nurses stood by. "We don't need to hurry," he said, turning to me. (Sale attended university in New Zealand and speaks flawless, New Zealand-accented English, as do many Tokelauans.)

However long he might have wanted the procedure to take, the doctor was done in about fifteen minutes. "Four stitches," he said, laughing, as we left. "For me, that's a big one." Living on Atafu is tough for a young doctor eager for traumas. There are only five hundred potential patients; there are no car accidents, no firearms, no traditions of knife-fighting. And, as Sale noted, miming a slap, "They don't even use their fists with any force." He went on, "Outside Tokelau, doctors don't want cases. But not me, I do." He was smiling. "I mean, I don't want people to come to harm. But I do wish the nurse would call me at 2 A.M. and say, 'There's a heart attack.' To do resuscitation, to use the defibrillator." We strolled back to the village center, and at that moment we were probably the fastest-moving objects on Atafu.

Vaelua Lopa, a retired schoolteacher and something of a village matriarch, was born on Atafu in the late nineteen-thirties, when houses on the atoll were made of wood and thatch. "As a kid, I rarely saw money," she said when we spoke in her living room, sitting on a plushly untropical red sofa. "I didn't know what money was. We were part of the sea, the sky." As she grew up, her only understanding of the outside world came from the boat that arrived a few times a year. "It was a big occasion in the community. 'Sail-ho! Sail-ho!' I had no idea where the boat came from. All I was interested in was whether it brought sugar and flour, which were very special. We lived on fish and coconut." At the age of eight, she was taken out of the local school and sent to study in Samoa, forcing the kind of wrenching separation that has since become common for Tokelauans, most of whom now have family abroad. (Expatriate Tokelauans in New Zealand and Australia now far outnumber island residents.) Lopa lived with relatives in Apia, where she was struck by the gigantic scale of her surroundings, and where she learned that Samoans looked down on Tokelauans: "You know, 'Oh, you coconut-eaters.' " Lopa returned home as a trained teacher, having only recently discovered that Tokelau was not an independent country. This points to the lightness of New Zealand's colonial touch, but also, perhaps, to some level of shared Tokelauan discomfort regarding the islands' economic dependence. (From the current C.I.A. World Factbook: "Arable land: 0%," "Permanent crops: 0%," "Natural resources: Negl.")

Lopa had voted "yes." As she put it, "no" voters "think that we can sit, and New Zealand will bring us money. But you have to grow up, man! Learn how to be yourself!" In her view, Tokelauans could best do that by returning to the pre-monetary economy of her ancestors, before the frequent cargo runs created an almost uninterrupted flow of stuff—electronics and canned meat, beer and soda. (Tokelauans have high rates of diabetes and obesity.) New Zealand funds were clearly required for infrastructure and disaster relief, but a self-determining Tokelau could aim for self-sufficiency. "We don't really need money," she said. "We don't want luxuries." As she spoke, my eyes had landed on a large television set. She had followed my gaze. "Yes, I have a TV!" she said, smiling. "But I'm not interested in watching TV!" She said that she had bought it for her children and grandchildren, who watch satellite television—Lopa has Tokelau's only dish.

Before I left Lopa, I asked her about Iosua Faamaoni, the pastor whose speech I had heard earlier in the day. Fifteen years ago, Faamaoni left the atoll after confessing to having sexually abused his adopted daughter, then twelve years old. No charge was brought against him. In 2004, Faamaoni returned and sought forgiveness. And, to the dismay of a large minority of the village, he was elected to serve again as pastor. Although it was not easy for a visitor to tell, neighbor had been set against neighbor, in a place where you can never be farther than a few hundred yards from your antagonist, who is also, almost certainly, a relative.

Lopa looked appalled at the mention of Faamaoni, and her tone, previously teasing and ironic, turned almost fearful, offering a glimpse of the social restraints beneath Tokelau's easy suburban surface. She frowned and shook her head. The people of Atafu had been instructed by village authorities not to talk to the Lady Naomi group about anything other than the vote, she said; she would not be a "traitor." I had already gathered that villagers hostile to the pastor were more likely to vote "yes" in the referendum, in the name of shaking up the existing political order, and reforming Tokelau's legal system, which was adept at dealing with episodes of public drunkenness but was ill-equipped to handle any crime besides murder—in which case a defendant would be transferred to New Zealand. (This has never happened; there is no record of a murder in Tokelau since 1881.) For other serious misdeeds, the maximum punishment was a few months' house arrest. Lopa, who opposed the pastor's rehabilitation, would say only that she no longer went to church—this being an almost unimaginable transgression in Tokelau—but instead had begun to worship, with others, at her home.

"I'm not going to shoot the messenger, but I'm also not going to renew his grant."

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By lunchtime, all but a handful of Atafu's hundred and eighty-three registered voters had cast their ballots, and the U.N. election monitors—a young Englishwoman and a large Fijian man—sat patiently in the heat, perfectly still. A local man went to "round up" the final voters. The electorate seemed more conscientious than engaged. There was no sign in Atafu of public political discourse. There were no posters or manifestos, unless one included a number of brief essays in the school magazine. ("Tokelau has not yet become a developed country," a stern fifteen-year-old wrote. "In my conclusion, for those who say Tokelau should be independent, you thought wrong.") The competition to design a Tokelauan flag had drawn fewer entries than anticipated—and some of them were no more than doodles on napkins. Falani Aukuso told me, with disappointment, that a high proportion of the designs made use of the U.K.'s Union Jack, as New Zealand's flag does; he took this to be a frustrating sign of political caution, if not wimpishness. Other designs that I saw were problematic in different ways: some included large crucifixes; and a few had symbolism that clearly referred to *four* atolls—implicitly annexing nearby Swains Island, also known as Olosenga, which is culturally tied to Tokelau but is, by international treaty, a satellite of American Samoa.

Kuresa Nasau, Atafu's *faipule*, acknowledged, in a roundabout way, that he had voted "no." He asked, "How can you love a country if it's without an airstrip or a ship?" Nasau is unusually candid for an elected official. He is the son of expatriate Tokelauans, who brought him up in Hawaii. He said that when he first moved to the atolls, at the age of forty-one, the only reason he didn't immediately leave was the miserable thought of getting back on the boat. "I didn't like the place," he said. "It took me seven years to get used to it. The pace is so slow. There's always another tomorrow."

That afternoon, Neil Walter and Tony Angelo, the law professor, took a gentlemanly dip in the lagoon. They bobbed up and down in a few feet of warm, clear water; Angelo protected himself from the sun with a hat and a T-shirt. In the *fale* in the center of the island, a group of older women played cards and, at one point, broke into "You Are My Sunshine," sung in English. A large, uniformed village policeman showed me a cucumber patch he had started in the unpromising coral by his back door.

MORNING

Sunday morning, the wind has washed our minds,
the streets are bleak as a monastic regimen.
The young still sleep in their white tents,
and only the elderly head churchward.
A gingko, still clinging to its leaves,
aglow with autumn's yellow fire,
announces that the moment has arrived.
Sunday morning, above the roofs of palaces and houses,
sombre chimes hold conversations
while little bells laugh: Dominicans
and Norbertines exchanging telegrams.
Clad in bronze, the Planty Garden monuments
doubtless long for normal skin,
for flesh and aching heads, but eternity has its demands.

We quarrelled here once, do you remember,
I looked for you in evening's labyrinth;
I held a book, you wore a summer dress
(the book went unread, but the dress spread
like the jacket of a Neoplatonic tract).
A bronze Boy Zielinski gazed at me, his eyes
retained the image of a firing squad,

The eastward, island-by-island peopling of Polynesia had reached Tokelau by the tenth century. The atolls, which have a history of belligerence toward one another, as well as traditions of communal living at the village level, were undisturbed by Europeans until 1765, when they were sighted by the British captain John Byron (the grandfather of the poet, and a source of material for "Don Juan"). But, because Tokelau had nothing to trade other than coconut products, the atolls attracted scant outside interest, and fewer than a dozen visits were recorded in the next eighty years. In the late eighteen-fifties, Christian missionaries arrived, and they documented one of the most devastating moments in Tokelau's history: the visits of Peruvian "recruiting" ships, in the mid-eighteen-sixties. Two hundred and fifty-three of the atolls' five hundred and forty-one residents—most of them men—were kidnapped and taken to work as slaves in Peru; most of them soon died of disease. "Sir, all the people of this land are carried off," a missionary on Atafu wrote to his superior, describing how islanders were tricked into the hull of a ship with the promise of a trade in fine cloth. The atolls were left so depopulated that, in the years that followed, boys were encouraged, after reaching sexual maturity, to have children by several different women.

There is little public acknowledgement of the raids in contemporary Tokelau: there is no memorial, no day set aside on the calendar. Neil Walter said that he had never heard the subject raised there. Whatever shared cultural memory exists has not been institutionalized, although Judith Huntsman and Antony Hooper, New Zealand anthropologists who made a long-term study of Tokelau, described playlets that had turned the events into a kind of slapstick. A number of Tokelauans told me about a surprising school fundraiser a few years ago in which children were dressed in rags and held behind a rope, as if they were slaves; their parents had to pay to "release" them. When I talked about the Peruvian ships with Baitika Aviata, a Tokelauan who trained as an accountant, he began suddenly to weep. "This was not discussed in the past," he said. "It's a very sensitive issue, but what can we do? We can't fight against it. We just pretend to take it lightly."

The episode does manifest itself in one quotidian way—in the European names carried by some Tokelauans. After the Peruvian boats had left, the atolls, which had lost nearly all men of marrying age, sought to boost their population by accepting a few foreign settlers, and Tokelau's electoral register is now dotted with Polynesian Pereiras and Polynesian Pedros.

On the atoll of Nukunonu, which we reached after another night aboard the Lady Naomi, I met Luciano Perez, the descendant of a Portuguese trader who arrived in the eighteen-sixties. Perez, a man in his late sixties, has a kind of chuckling, restless sociability that I didn't otherwise see on the islands. He lives at the water's edge, by an almost Mediterranean little bay, not far from a point that his neighbor claimed, with some risk of bathos, was the highest spot in all of Tokelau. We talked in a room decorated with a dried-out turtle, a Mickey Mouse cuckoo clock, and a certificate that read "The Holy Father John Paul II Paternally Imparts His Apostolic Blessing to Luciano and Juliana Perez on the Occasion of Their 30th Wedding Anniversary." (Whereas Atafu is exclusively Protestant, Nukunonu is exclusively Catholic.)

that masterpiece of Prussian architecture.
The wind washed minds and streets, it washed the sun.
Georg Trakl died several hundred yards away,
killed by ecstasy or despair.
And we sat on that bench late one night
and tried to hear the ocean.
The moon was full, the stars ran quietly.
The moment came, after long negotiations,
broken off and taken up, abandoned once again,
when the past, wise and dry as parchments,
decided to make peace with petty day,
with the morning's improvisation, its damp breath,
my thoughts' dampness, my unrest,
and a delegation of the dead, poets, but also night watchmen,
experienced students of the darkness, and midwives,
who knew how bodies opened,
agreed that it was high time,
in silence, Sunday morning, when trees
flame peacefully, agreed conditionally
that I should wake and realize that the moment had arrived,
the moment had arrived, and would be gone.

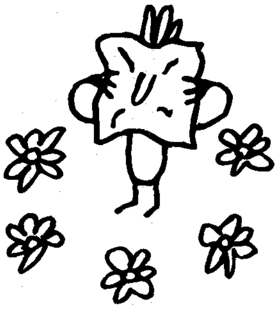
—*Adam Zagajewski*

(*Translated, from the Polish, by Clare Cavanagh.*)

Luciano and Juliana Perez are in the unusual position of being Tokelau's village capitalists, in a culture that one Tokelauan characterized as "communist, with a small 'c.'" Their business is the Luana Liki Hotel and Bar, which opened in 1995. It has seven guest rooms and a balcony that looks out over Nukunonu's lagoon, which is far larger than Atafu's.

Not only do Tokelauans lack a tradition of selling things to one another; they don't sell to visitors, either. (The referendum boat must have had a souvenir budget of several thousand dollars, but none of this potential largesse was spent in Tokelau; I overheard one member of the U.N. team almost plead to be allowed to buy woven fans and bags, but they were only offered to us as going-away presents.) The territory's economy is a monetarized and subsidized variation on traditional communal practices. New Zealand provides eighty per cent of the territory's budget; the rest derives mainly from fishing licenses, and a little from the sale of fancy stamps. Out of these funds, the Tokelauan government not only pays its salaried staff—there is a school and a small hospital on each atoll—it also pays some form of stipend to most other adults. On Atafu, women are given the equivalent of fifty dollars a month, while on all three atolls the men must join what is called, in translation, the "able-bodied workforce." The men make themselves available every weekday morning in the village center, or show a doctor's note. On a given day, the task might be to unload a ship, or collect garbage, or fish for the village, or there might well be no task at all. In the past, such labor was an unpaid civic duty, but the role now entitles men to an average of two hundred dollars a month.

This accounts for all employment in Tokelau. For the three-quarters of high-school graduates who do not win scholarships to continue studying abroad at a university, the choice is between immigrating to New Zealand, to join its labor market, or withdrawing from any labor market at all; between, on the one hand, economic individualism and social anonymity, and, on the other, scant privacy, long afternoons, and almost limitless tuna. There are no private plumbers or electricians in Tokelau. The one store in each village is coöperatively owned and opens for only a few grudging hours a day. In Tokelau, people go out fishing for themselves, but they don't sell their catch; and, as part of a tradition known as *inati*, if they land more fish than they personally need—fifty small fish, or any sizable haul of marlin or tuna—then the catch will be fairly distributed throughout the village, following carefully preset family quotas. (When I reached Fakaofo, I asked about the temptation to bring in forty-nine fish, and I was given a look of withering pity. But I was touched to be included in the *inati;* a man came to the door and gave me a two-foot bonito. He went on to ask, "Do you have any DVDs of blue movies?")



Luciano Perez has opted out of the system. He was the atoll's school principal for thirty-one years, and he saved some money. When he retired, he was expected to take his place among the able-bodied men, but he resisted. "I said, 'We've got our choices, our feelings. I worked for thirty-one years!' I said, 'I can't work, work, work until my last minute.'" Instead, he ran his hotel. "A lot of people tried to pull me down," Perez said. "They saw someone rising up, and want to bring him down. People want to see the community rise, not individuals."

Perez not only lacks community encouragement; he lacks clients. Tokelau has no more than twenty tourists a year, and has a limited collective appetite for entertaining. (When Billy Connolly, the Scottish actor, and his wife, Pamela Stephenson, recently sailed their yacht to Fakaofo, they were initially asked to leave; in Stephenson's new travel book, "Treasure Islands," the episode is remembered in a chapter entitled "Told to Fakaofo.") Perez showed me his visitors' book. A decade of guests filled only a few pages, and most entries were written by visiting officials. ("A pleasure to be here as part of the Atafu Tokelau cervical-screening team.") Neil Walter had written, "Many thanks . . . despite the cyclone."

On the day I was in Nukunonu, Perez actually had a guest: a wiry, chain-smoking radio hobbyist from Germany named Udo Moeller. A retired chemical scientist, Moeller travels in remote parts of the Pacific for five months of the year, setting up in each place a little radio outpost that others then take pride in reaching: to talk to Tokelau, in particular, is a coup for any shortwave enthusiast. But Perez's hotel is usually empty, and so is his bar. Perez explained that Nukunonu residents can buy beer from the village shop only on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and each person can buy just three bottles on each day. There is *no* adjustment for bar owners. Twice a week, Perez buys his beer, as well as the allowance due to his wife and adult children. This adds up to twenty-four bottles a week. When his stockpile has grown sufficiently large, he can open the bar for a night and turn on its karaoke machine.

Perez's pioneering role as an entrepreneur has yet to attract followers, although Baitika Aviata, the trained accountant, led me through what some might regard as premature plans for setting up a Tokelauan chamber of commerce. (He said that he wanted to "create an upper class, a lower class. It's revolutionary!") When I asked a group of children playing Tokelau's version of cricket what they wanted to do as adults, the one who seemed sharpest, a girl in her early teens, said "shopkeeper," which, in this context, was perhaps as ambitious as saying "surgeon" or "pilot."

Tokelau is, in fact, struggling to hold on to its teen-agers, who are increasingly familiar with the outside world, through movies, the Internet, and expatriate uncles, but whose detachment from it is painfully physical. Vaelua Lopa told me of a grandson who, at fourteen, had headed out to sea with a friend in an open aluminum boat; they had just a few gallons of water between them. "He was thinking he'd end up on land," she said. "That was the dream. So they just took off—just went *zzzzp*, with an outboard." The New Zealand military sent rescue planes, and after five or six days the boys were found, alive, several hundred miles away. Such episodes are surprisingly common. Doug Brown, the captain of the smaller Tokelau ferry, told me that he had recently helped locate three boys in the open sea who said that they were trying to "reach America" in a little boat equipped with only a few dozen coconuts. While some of these trips are the misadventures of teen-agers, others are suicide attempts. A Tokelau suicide drives a boat out to sea until the gas runs out.

On Nukunonu, the population was thought to have voted "yes," by an overwhelming margin. The village had even come up with a referendum song, which translated as "Be happy, the day of the referendum is coming, every Tokelauan is happy." Pio Tuia, the atoll's ebullient *faipule*, made a speech that spoke of "driving away colonial shadows." But on Fakaofo, our third and last atoll, which we reached the next day, there was no singing, no rousing speeches, and the welcoming ceremony was a subdued affair along an alleyway. "The mood here worries me a bit," Walter said. "It doesn't feel quite right."

The main inhabited island at Fakaofo looks like part of a low-rise, tropical town that has been dropped in the middle of the ocean. A seawall rises directly out of the water; at the top of the wall, the village begins. You immediately understand why the five hundred people on this atoll seem to take the threat of rising sea levels more seriously than their neighbors. The island is no larger than twenty-five acres, or about one and a half Ikeas; if you host a party, you disturb everybody. In school sports, a "marathon" is eight hundred metres. Space is so tight that Kolouei O'Brien, the *faipule*, is partway through building a four-story house, which by Tokelauan standards is a skyscraper.

After the polling booths opened, Walter invited me to join him at a closed meeting with the atoll's council of "gray-hairs," which was held nearby in a hot, bare room. These were wary-looking men. One had set his watch to beep for thirty seconds every five minutes—which seemed like a joke on the apparent abundance of time on Tokelau, where, for everyone but schoolchildren, the days seemed to be barely divided between morning and afternoon. At the meeting, Walter made a short speech, and observed that the referendum was "an opportunity that might or might not come twice"—as close to a threat as a diplomat in his position gets to make. When he had finished, he invited questions. For a long while, only the beeping watch disturbed an awkward and unsmiling silence.

Afterward, I walked with Walter back to the polling station, which took us through Fakaofo's tight grid of homes to the village's central patch of clear space: a short strip of concrete in the middle of coral gravel. This is where the village plays cricket with a hard rubber ball; hitting the ball into the sea counts as six runs. Walter is something of a sportsman, and has played cricket here; but he has only watched Tokelauan rugby games, which are played on a similar surface, but with no allowance made for the abrasiveness of the coral. "I've never *seen* so much first aid," Walter said.

He was wondering if Fakaofo, previously thought to be safely pro-referendum, might now tilt the vote to a "no." "The *faipule* has come under some close questioning from some of the more outspoken members of the next generation," he said.

I took a ride on the atoll's aluminum school boat to visit Tino Vitale, a vocal critic of the referendum. We passed one of Fakaofo's two cemetery islands—it is about as wide as its palm trees are high—and within ten minutes arrived at Fakaofo's offshore suburb, which was first settled in the nineteen-sixties. The atoll's school and hospital are here, as is the office of Teletok, the government agency that runs the territory's fairly new telephone service, and its even newer high-speed Internet connection, which is available for public use at various points on each atoll, although not in private homes.

Vitale, a worldly, articulate man in his forties, is the director of Teletok. At his disordered office, down a path near the beach at the end of the island, he explained why he had voted "no." In his view, the Tokelau atolls were unprepared for self-government: they lacked infrastructure and management skills. He had been angered by the example of a failed fish-exportation scheme. A few years ago, New Zealand helped fund three small fish-processing centers in Tokelau; they now stood empty and unused, one on each atoll. In Vitale's opinion, the project was ill-conceived—the only way to ship the fish was by the two irregular ferries—and Tokelauans were not ready to commit to a repetitive daily work routine. "We should have had the structures in place, trained the people," he said. His fear was that a newly self-determining Tokelau would receive millions of dollars from, say, the European Union, and then mishandle those funds, humiliating the nation with bad publicity.

Fakaofo's village authorities had held a number of pep-talk public meetings to make the case for a "yes" vote. At one of these, Vitale had asked why the village was not hearing arguments on the other side. He was shouted down—"Everyone's been talking about democracy, but I don't think there is a democracy here," he told me—but what he called "the silent 'no' voters" in the village had begun to rouse themselves.

The polling ended at five in the afternoon. Two police officers dressed in white poured the papers out of the ballot boxes (all the atolls' mixed together) and then held up each box to show that it was empty, like a magician working with unwieldy props; election officials began building "yes" piles and "no" piles in front of them. Boxing-ring ropes had been tied around the perimeter of the *fale*, which was open on all sides to the village, but they held back only a few members of the Lady Naomi party, and no one else. "Isn't it odd how the Tokelauans aren't here?" someone said. "You'd have thought they'd be lined up around here. They don't even have TV!" Nearby, a few young Tokelauans were husking a pile of green coconuts; they barely looked over.

During the count, the loudest sound was from a water cooler bubbling in the corner. The result was written on a piece of paper, and was taken first to the Tokelauan election committee, at one end of the *fale*, and then to Neil Walter, at the other. The Administrator unfolded the paper and shook his head. "Didn't make it," he said. Walter would not have the satisfaction of ending his career by abolishing his own job.

Tokelauans had signed a declaration of dependence. As one resident, characterizing this mind-set, put it, "Only when I'm suffering, then I really want to change. I'm not suffering." Walter stood up and thanked the referendum workers; he turned to the vote monitors and added quietly, in a rather brittle voice, "Great referendum, bum result."

Robert Aisi, the Papua New Guinean, had told me earlier, half-jokingly, that he would return to the U.N. Special Committee with one of two messages: "It'll be either 'Sorry, we didn't make it' or 'Hey, we're suddenly relevant again!' " Now, he smiled stiffly. "The people have spoken," he said. Falani Aukuso, the civil-service leader, had a look of suppressed fury. (Later, when he met with the representatives from New Zealand and the U.N., he mourned the fact that the atolls had squandered so much international good will.) And Pio Tuia, the Nukunonu *faipule*, told me, "The Tokelauan public has never been part of the decision-making process, and, now that we've given them a chance, they don't really understand what is going on." He went on, "They don't have a sense of manhood. They depend on New Zealand. They do not realize that being a man has not yet been revealed to them. It's like a baby and a mother. I hate that. I hate that! We are old enough to determine our own future."

There was a ceremony at the *fale* that evening. Kolouei O'Brien officially replaced Pio Tuia as *ulu* of Tokelau, and residents lined up to offer him New Zealand banknotes as a tribute. Formal Polynesian dancing was followed by beer and informal Polynesian dancing.

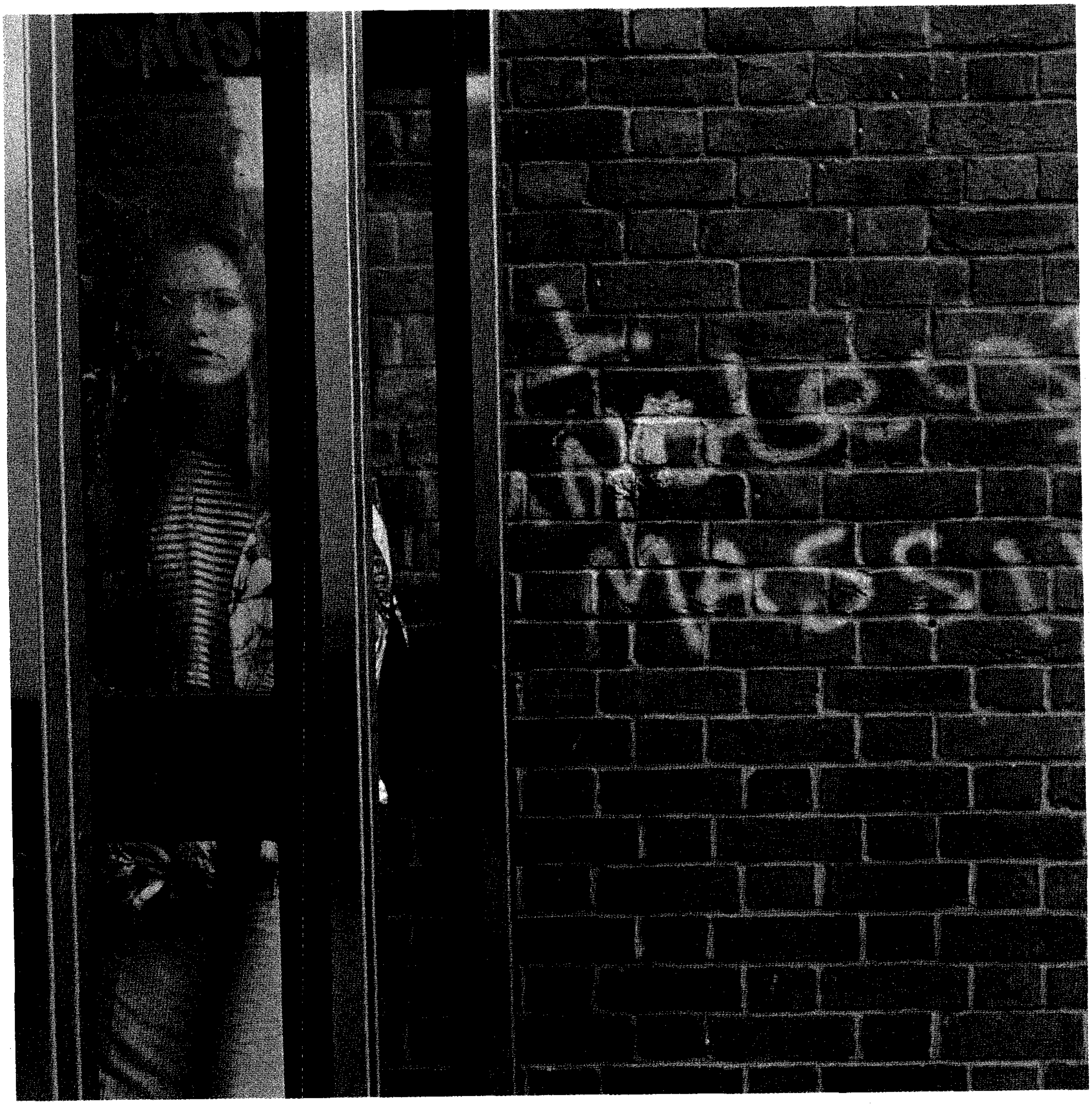
The next day, the referendum party sailed for Samoa on the Lady Naomi, and the people of Fakaofo were again left, for a while, without any means of travelling beyond Fakaofo. The women of the village sat cross-legged in the *fale*, and played a slow, laughing game of bingo for prizes of toilet paper and soda—a game that was, in effect, a way to prolong the process of acquiring household essentials. I walked a few dozen paces to the northern end of the island, where a teen-ager named Eric Elika was checking on his family's pigs. Fakaofo has so little space that its hundred or so pigs live on a low-lying coral shelf that is mostly underwater at high tide. At those times, lifted by the rising water, the pigs swim, their snouts in the air—and for this they have a fame that has spread at least as far as a New Zealand school textbook. The pigs also eat seafood. I asked Elika how these animals caught fish, and he mimed for me the action of a pig first waiting with its mouth open in the water, then snapping it shut, as a fish wiggled into it. As we spoke, some young children were shrieking and diving off the seawall not far away. Behind Elika—who has left Tokelau only once in his life—I could see, on the far side of the lagoon, high surf silently breaking onto the coral. ♦

"My basic judicial philosophy is 'Guilty.' "

FICTION

AN AFTERNOON

BY WILLIAM TREVOR



Someone had left a comic paper on the seat near where he sat and he read the strips while he waited. All the way to the bus station he had hurried because he liked being early for things. He liked to take his time, to settle himself, and he did so now. He knew she'd come.

Jasmin knew he was going to be different, no way he couldn't be; no way he'd be wearing a baseball cap backward over a No. 1 cut, or be gawky like Lukie Giggs, or make the clucking noise that Darren Finn made when he was trying to get a word out. She couldn't have guessed, all she knew was he wouldn't be like them. Could be he'd put you in mind of the Raw Deal drummer, whatever his name was, or of Al in "Doc Martin." But the boy at the bus station wasn't like either. And he wasn't a boy, not for a minute.

He was the only person waiting who was alone, apart from herself, and he didn't seem interested in the announcements about which buses were arriving or about to go. He didn't look up when people came in. He hadn't glanced once in her direction. In the end, if nothing happened, Jasmin knew she would have to be brazen. She called it that to herself because it was what it amounted to, because you didn't get anywhere if you weren't. All your life you'd be carrying teas to the lorrymen in the diner, wiping down the tables and clearing away plastic plates, doing yourself an injury because you were soaking up the lorrymen's cigarette smoke. "Now, you don't be brazen, Angie," her mother used to scold her when she was no more than five or six and used to reach up for the cooking dates or a chocolate bar in the Pricerite, opening whatever it was before her mother saw.

"You carry that to a woman doing the shelves. You say a mistake, you tell her that. Brazen you are," her mother always ended up. "You just watch it, girl." She kept quiet herself. She never approached a woman who was arranging the shelves, just put whatever she'd taken behind the cornflakes or the kitchen rolls. Jasmin was her own choice of name, since she'd always detested Angie and considered it common when she was older. "Oh, la-di-da!" her mother's riposte had been to this further evidence of brazenness. "Listen to our madam!" she would urge Holby, trying to draw the husband she had now into it, but Holby had become fly about things like that, having learned a lesson when he'd been drawn into a no-go marriage. It wasn't even the way you spelled it, her mother witheringly commented; no "e" at the end was your bloody Muslim way. But when her mother wasn't there Holby said all that was a load of rubbish. "You spell your name like it suits you," he advised. "You stick to how you want it." Her mother was a violent woman, Jasmin considered, and knew that Holby did, too.

"Excuse me," she said, crossing to where the man was waiting. "I'm Jasmin."

He smiled at her. He had a peaky face, his teeth crowded at the front, light-colored hair left long. He was wearing flannel trousers and a jacket, and that surprised her. A kind of speckled navy blue the jacket was, with a gray tie. And shoes, not trainers—all very tidy. What surprised her more than anything was that he could have been mid-thirties, maybe a few years older. From his voice on the chat line, she'd thought more like nineteen.

"You fancy a coffee, Jasmin?" he said.

She felt excited when he spoke. The first time, on the chat line, she'd felt it when he'd called her Jasmin. Then again yesterday, when he'd said why don't they meet up?

"Yeah, sure," she said.

All the time he kept his smile going. He was the happy sort, he'd told her on the chat line, not the first time, maybe the third or fourth. He'd asked her if she was the happy sort herself and she'd said yes, even though she knew she wasn't. Droopy was what she was, she'd heard her mother saying when Holby first came to live in the house; and later on, when her mother wasn't there, Holby asked her what the trouble was and she said nothing. "Missing your dad?" Holby suggested. Seven she'd been then.

"You like to go in here?" the man suggested when they came to a McDonald's. "You all right with a McDonald's, Jasmin?"

Just coffee, she said when he offered her a burger, and he said he'd bring it to her. Her father had gone when he found out her mother was going with Holby. Her mother said she didn't care, but six months later she made Holby marry her, because she'd been caught, she maintained, having not been married to Jasmin's father.

"I like a McDonald's," the man said, coming with the coffee.

He was smiling again, and she wondered if he had smiled all the time at the counter. She didn't know his name. Three weeks ago she'd first heard his voice on the chat line. "I'm Jasmin," she'd said, expecting him to say his name also, but he hadn't.

"I could nearly tell your age," he said now. "From talking to you I nearly could."

"Sixteen."

"I thought sixteen."

They sat at the counter that ran along the window. People on the pavement outside were in a hurry, jostling one another, no cars or buses allowed in this street.

"You're pretty," he said. "You're pretty, Jasmin."

She wasn't really. She couldn't be called pretty, but he said it anyway, and he wondered if there was a similar flattery he would particularly enjoy himself. While they watched the people on the street he thought about that, imagining the baby voice in which she gabbled her words saying something like he knew his way around, or saying he had an easy way with him.

"You think I'd be younger?" he asked her.

"Yeah, maybe."

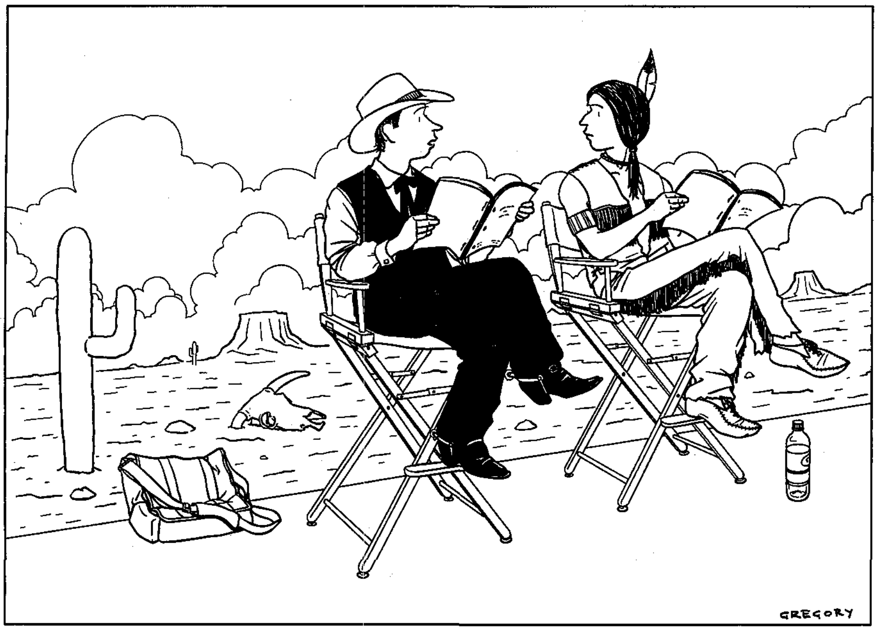
She gave a little shrug, her thin shoulders jerking rapidly up and down. The red anorak she wore wasn't grubby but had a faded, washed-out look. Other girls would have thrown it away.

"I like your charm," he said, and pointed because she didn't know he meant the brooch that was pinned to the flimsy pink material of her dress. Her chest was flat and he could have said he liked that, too, because it was the truth. But the truth didn't always do, as he had long ago learned, and he smiled instead. Her bare, pale legs were like twigs stripped of their bark and he remembered how he used to do that, long ago, too. Her shoes were pinkish, high-heeled.

"It's nothing," she said, referring to her brooch. She shrugged in the same jerky way again, a spasm it seemed almost, although he knew it wasn't. "A fish," she said. "It's meant to be a fish."

"It's beautiful, Jasmin."

DETAIL: KATE ABOLINS/MILLENNIUM IMAGES



"When you say 'my people,' do you mean your tribe or your reps?"

• •

"Holby gave it to me."

"Who's Holby, then?"

"My mother got married to him."

"Your father, is this?"

"Bloody not."

He smiled. In one of their conversations he'd asked her if she was pretty and she'd said maybe and he'd guessed she wasn't from the way she'd said it. They went in for fantasy—they put things on. Well, everyone did, of course.

"Same age as you, Jasmin—you think that when we talked? What age you think?"

"You didn't sound a kid," she said.

She had a stud in one side of her nose and a little coil pierced into the edge of one ear. He wondered if she had something in her belly button and wanted to ask her but knew not to. He wanted to close his eyes and think about a gleam of something nestling there, but he smiled instead. Her hair was lank, no frizziness left in it, brightened with a coloring.

"You take trouble," he said. "I thought you'd be the kind. I could tell you'd take trouble with yourself."

Again there was the shrug. She held the paper coffee mug between her hands as if for warmth. She asked him if he was in work and he said yes, the law.

"The law? With the police?" She looked around, an agitated movement, her eyes alarmed. He could take her hand, he thought, a natural thing to do, but he resisted that, too.

"The courts," he said. "If there's a dispute, if there's trouble I have to put a case. No, not the police, nothing to do with the police."

She nodded, unease draining away.

"You going to be a nurse, Jasmin? Caring for people. I see you caring for people, Jasmin."

When they asked, he always said the courts. And usually he said he could see them caring for people.

The Gold Mine was a place he knew, and they went there to play the fruit machines. He always won, he said, but today he didn't. He didn't mind that. He didn't raise the roof like Giggs did when his money went for nothing. He didn't say the whole thing was fixed. Good days, bad days was all he said.

"No, you take it," he said when she had to explain she hadn't any money, and in the end she took the two-pound coin he gave to where they broke it down for her. He picked up a necklace for her with the grab, guiding the grab skillfully, knowing when to open the metal teeth and knowing not to be in a hurry to close them, to wait until he was certain. He'd cleared out everything there was on offer once, he said—sweets, jewelry, dice, three packs of cards, two penknives, the dancing doll, a Minnie Mouse, ornaments. He swivelled the crane about when he got the necklace for her, asking her what she wanted next, but this time the teeth closed an instant too soon and the bangle he'd gone after moved only slightly and then slipped back. They spent an hour in the Gold Mine.

"Go back to the bus station for a while?" he suggested, and Jasmin said she didn't mind. But on the way there were some seats, one on each side of a small concrete space with a concrete trough of shrubs in the middle. The shrubs were mostly dead, but one of the seats was empty and he asked her if she'd like to sit there.

"Yeah, it's nice," Jasmin said.

An elderly man, asleep, was stretched out on the seat opposite the empty one. On another, a mother and her children were eating chips. On the third two women, in silence, stared at nothing.

"I come here when it's sunny," the man Jasmin was with said. "Nothing better to do, I come here."

He'd made her wear the necklace, putting it on for her, the tips of his fingers cool on her neck as he fiddled with the clasp. He'd said it suited her. It suited her eyes, he'd said, and she wondered about that, the beads being yellowish. When they'd been going toward the machine that took you to the stars he'd said he was twenty-nine and she'd wanted to say she liked his being older, and almost did.

"The sun all right for you, Jasmin?"

The two women looked at them, one and then the other, still not speaking. The mother scolded her children when they asked for more chips. She bundled the empty cartons into a waste bin and they went away.

"There's vitamins in the sun. You know that, Jasmin?"

She nodded, although she hadn't been aware of this. She tried to look at her necklace but she couldn't see it properly when she pulled it taut and squinted down at the beads. If she'd been alone she would have taken it off, but she didn't like to do that now.

"Jasmin's a great name," he said. On the chat line he had said that, complimenting her, although he didn't know she had given herself the name. She'd often thought he was affectionate when they had their conversations on the chat line, even though she'd been puzzled a few times when he described the telephone box he was in or read out what was written on a wall. The first time he'd read something out without saying he was doing it she'd wondered if he was all there in the head, but then he explained and it was all right. She imagined him in the courts, like you'd see on TV. She imagined him standing up with papers in one hand, putting a case. She imagined him looking to where she was watching, and his smile coming on, and wanting to wave at him but knowing she mustn't because he'd have told her that. The first time on the chat line he'd commented on her voice. "You take it easy, now," he'd said, and she hung on because she didn't want him to go. "Love that voice," he said and she realized he meant hers.

He was smiling at her now, and they watched the sleeping man waking up. He had made a pillow of a plastic carrier bag stuffed full of what might have been clothes. He had undone his shoelaces and he did them up again. He looked about him and then he went away.

"I thought you might say no, Jasmin, when I put it to you we'd meet up. Know what I mean, Jasmin? That you wouldn't want to take it further."

She shook her head, denying that. She wanted her mother to go by, coming back from the betting shop, where the man Holby didn't know about worked. Holby was pathetic, her mother said, another mistake she'd made, same's the one with Jasmin's father. She had got into a relationship with the betting-shop man and the next thing would be he'd be a mistake, too, no way he wouldn't.

"I'd never," Jasmin heard herself protesting. "I'd never have said no."

She shook her head to make certain he was reassured. He'd lowered his voice when he'd said he had worried in case she'd say no. She didn't want anything spoiled; she wanted everything to go on being as good as on the chat line, as good as it was now.

"You at a loose end, Jasmin? You got the time today, come round to my place?"

Again there was the ripple of excitement. She could feel it all over her body, a fluttering of pins and needles it almost felt like but she knew it wasn't that. She loved being with him; she'd known she would. "Yeah," she said, not hesitating, not wanting him to think she had. "Yeah, I got the time today."

"Best to walk," he said. "All right with a walk, Jasmin?"

" 'Course I am." And, because it seemed to belong now, Jasmin added that she didn't know his name.

"Clive," he said.

He liked that name and often gave it. Usually, they asked, sometimes even on the chat line, before they got going. Rodney he liked, too. Ken he liked. And Alistair.

"I never knew a Clive," she said.

"You're living at home, Jasmin?"

"Oh, yes."

"You said. A bit ago you said that. I only wondered if you'd moved out by now."

"I wish I'd be able to."

"Arm's length, are they?"

She didn't understand, and he said her mother and whoever. On the chat line he remembered she'd said she was an only child. Her mother she'd mentioned then, the boyfriend she'd referred to in the bus station. He asked about him, wondering if he was West Indian, and she said yes. Light-colored, she said. "He passes."

They had turned out of the busy streets, into Blenning Row, leading to Sowell Street, where the lavatories were, the school at the end.

"A West Indian kid got killed here," he said. "White kids took their knives out. You ever see a thing like that, Jasmin?"

"No." Vehemently, she shook her head, and he laughed and then she did.

"You ever think of moving out, Jasmin? Anything like that come into your thoughts? Get a place of your own?"

All the time, she said. The only thing was, she wasn't earning.

"First thing you said to me nearly, that you'd got nothing coming in."

"You're easy to talk with, Clive."

He took her hand; she didn't object. Her fingernails were silvery, he'd noticed in the McDonald's, a couple of them jagged where they'd broken. No way she wasn't a child, no way she'd reached sixteen, more like twelve. Her hand was warm, lying there in his, dampish, fingers interlaced with his.

"There used to be a song," he said. " 'Putting on the agony' was how it went. 'Putting on the style.' Before your time, Jas. It could have been called something else, only those were the words. 'That's what all the young folk are doin' all the while.' Lovely song."

"Maybe I heard it one time, I don't know."

"What age really, Jas?"

"Seventeen."

"No, really, though?"

She said fifteen. Sixteen in October, she said.

When they were passing the Queen and Angel he asked her if she ever took a drink. It wouldn't do for him to bring her onto licensed premises, he explained, and she said she wasn't fussy for a drink, remembering the taste of beer, which she hadn't liked. He said to wait and he went to an off-license across the street and came back with a plastic bag. He winked at her and she laughed. "Mustn't be bad boys," he said. "No more than a few sips."

They came to a bridge over the river. They didn't cross it, but went down steps to a towpath. He said it was a shortcut.

There wasn't anyone around, and they leaned against a brick wall that was part of the bridge. He unscrewed the cap of the bottle he'd bought and showed her how the plastic disk he took from one of his jacket pockets opened out to become a tumbler. Tonic wine, he said, but he had vodka, too, miniatures he called the little bottles he had. What the Russians drank, he said, although she knew. He said he'd been in Moscow once.

They drank from the tumbler when he'd tasted the mixture he'd made and said it wasn't too strong. He'd never been responsible for making any girl drunk, he said. He had found the collapsible tumbler on the same seat where they'd been sitting in the sun. One day he'd seen it there and thought it was a powder compact. He carried it about with him in case he met a friend who'd like a drink.

"All right, Jas?"

"Yeah, great."

"You like it, Jas?"

They passed the tumbler back and forth between them. She drank from where his lips had been; she wanted to do that. He saw her doing it and he smiled at her.

Nice in the sun, he said when they walked on, and he took her hand again. She thought he'd kiss her, but he didn't. She wanted him to. She wanted to sit on a patch of grass and watch the rowers going by, his arm around her shoulders, his free hand holding hers. There was some left in the bottles when he dropped them and the plastic bag into a waste bin.

"Sit down, will we?" she said, and they did, her head pressed into his chest. "I love you, Clive," she whispered, not able to stop herself.

"We belong," he whispered back. "No way we don't, Jas."

She didn't break the silence when they walked on, knowing that it was special, and better than all the words there might have been. No words were necessary, no words could add a thing to what there was.

"I can see us in Moscow, Jas. I can see us walking the streets."

She felt different, as if her plainness wasn't there. Her face felt different, her body, too. In the diner she'd be a different person clearing up the plates, not minding the lorrymen's cigarette smoke, not minding what they said to her. Nothing she knew would be the same, her mother wouldn't be, and letting Lukie Giggs touch her where he wanted to wouldn't be. She wondered if she was drunk.

"You're never drunk, Jas." He squeezed her hand, he said she was fantastic. Both of them were only tipsy, he said. Happy, he said. Soon's he heard her voice he knew she was fantastic. Soon's he saw her at the bus station. In the room they were going to there were the things he collected—little plastic tortoises, and racing cars, and books about places he wanted to go to, and pictures of castles on the walls. She imagined that when he told her, and saw a vase of summer flowers, curtains drawn against the sunlight. He played a disk for her, the Spice Girls, because they were in the past and he liked all that.

They turned off the towpath, into a lane with a row of garage doors running along it, and walled back gardens on the other side. They came out on to a suburban road, and crossed it to a crescent. He dropped her hand before they reached it and pulled down the back of his jacket where it had ridden up a bit. He buttoned all three buttons.

"Would you wait five minutes, Jas?"

It was as if she knew about that, as if she knew why she had to wait and why it should be five minutes, as if he'd told her something she'd forgotten. She knew he hadn't. It didn't matter.

"You be all right, Jas?"

"'Course I will."

She watched him walking off and when he reached a front gate painted blue. She watched him as she had when he crossed the street to the off-license. She waited, as she had waited then, too, seeing again the little tortoises and the racing cars, hearing the Spice Girls. Across the road a delivery van drew up. No one got out, and a minute or so later it drove off. A dog went by. A woman started a lawnmower in one of the front gardens.

She waited for longer than he'd said, for ages it felt like, but when he came back he was hurrying, as if making up for that. He almost ran, his flannel trousers flapping. He was out of breath when he reached her. He shook his head and said they'd best go back.

"Back?"

"Best to go back, Jas."

He took her arm, but he was edgy and didn't take it as he had before. He didn't search for her hand. He pulled her anorak when it was difficult for her to keep up with him. Behind them somewhere a car door banged.

"Oh, God," he said.

A red car slowed down beside them as they were turning into the lane with the garage doors. When it stopped a woman with glasses on a string around her neck got out. She was wearing a brown skirt and a cardigan that matched it over a pale silk blouse. Her dark hair was coiled round her head, her lipstick glistened, as if she hadn't had time to powder it over or had forgotten to. The glasses bobbed about on her blouse and then were still. Her voice was angry when she spoke but she kept it low, giving the impression that her teeth were clenched.

"I don't believe this," she said.

She spoke as if Jasmin wasn't there. She didn't look at her, not even glancing in her direction.

"For God's sake!" she almost shouted, and slammed the door of the car shut, as if she had to do something, as if only noise could express what she felt.

"For God's sake, after all we've been through!"

Her face was quivering with rage, one hand made into a fist that struck the roof of the car once and then opened, to fall by her side. There was silence then.

"Who is she?" The woman spoke when the silence had gone on, at last recognizing Jasmin's presence. Her question came wearily, in a bleak, dull tone. "You're on probation," she said. "Did you forget somehow that you were on probation?"

The man whom she railed at had not attempted to speak, had made no protestation, but words were muttered now. "She was looking for the towpath. She asked me where it was. I don't know who she is."

The long, peaky features might never that afternoon, or any afternoon, have been other than they had become in the brief time that had passed, devoid of all expression, dead, a dribble of tears beginning.

Then Jasmin's companion of so many conversations, and whom she had begun to love, shambled off, and the woman said nothing until he reached the blue-painted ornamental gate and again disappeared around the side of the house.

"Was there anything?" she asked then. She stared at Jasmin. Slowly she looked her up and down. Jasmin didn't know what her question meant. "Did he do anything to you?" the woman asked, and Jasmin understood and yet did not. What mattered more was that he had cried, his happiness taken from him, his smile, too. He had cried for her. He had cried for both of them. All that she understood too well.

"Who are you?" the woman asked. Her clenched-back voice, deprived of the energy of its anger, was frightened, and fear clung to the tiredness in her face.

"Clive's my friend," Jasmin said. "There wasn't nothing wrong. We done nothing wrong."

"That's not his name."

"Clive, he said."

"He says anything. Did he give you drink?"

Jasmin shook her head. Why should she say? Why should she get him into trouble?

"You reek of drink," the woman said. "Every time he gives them drink."

"He done nothing."

"His mother was my sister. He lives with us."

If she'd asked him, Jasmin said, he would have explained about his name. But the woman just stared at her when she began to tell her that she, also, had given herself a name, that sometimes people wanted to.

"My sister died," the woman said. "He's been living with us since that. He thought the house would be empty this afternoon but it wasn't, because I changed my mind about going out. You worry and you change your mind. Quite often you do. Well, naturally, I suppose. He's been on charges."

"He was only going to show me, like, where it is he lived."

"What's your name?"

"Jasmin."

"If this is known they'll take him in again."

Jasmin shook her head. There was a mistake, she said. The woman said there wasn't.

"We look after him, we lie for him, my husband and I. We've done our best since my sister died. A family thing, you do your best."

"There wasn't anything."

"My sister knew his chance would come. She knew there'd be a day that would be too terrible for her to bear. He was her child, after all. It was too much. She left a note."

"Honestly, I promise you."

"I know, I know."

The woman got into her car and wound the window down as if she intended to say something else but she said nothing. She turned in the quiet road and drove back to her house.

Frying chops, Holby prodded them occasionally with a fork. He liked to blacken them, to see the smoke rising while still not turning down the gas. It got into her hair, Jasmin's mother maintained.

Smoke like that was greasy, she insisted, but Holby said it couldn't be. He heard the door when Jasmin came into the kitchen and called out to her, knowing it wasn't her mother who'd come in. "How you doing, girl?"

All right, Jasmin said, and then her mother was there, back from her time with her betting-shop friend. Even through the smoke, her entrance brought a gush of the perfume she so lavishly applied when she met her men.

"What're you frying, Holby?" She shouted above the sizzling of the meat, and Jasmin knew there was going to be a quarrel.

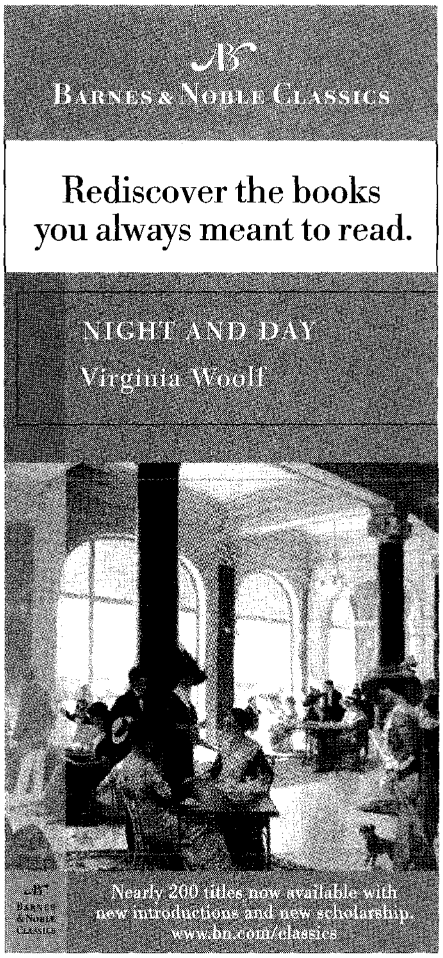
In her room, even with the door closed she heard it beginning, her mother's noisy criticisms, Holby's measured drone of retaliation. She didn't listen. Probably he had guessed at last about the betting-shop man, as her father had once guessed about him. Probably it had come to that—the frying of the chops, the smoke, the grease no more than a provocation, a way of standing up for himself. And Holby—today or some other day—would walk out, saying no man could stand it, which Jasmin remembered her father saying, too.

She pulled the curtains over and lay down on her bed. She liked the twilight she had induced; even on better days than this she did. Tired after the walk to the house with the man she had begun to love, and after that the walk alone to where she lived herself, she closed her eyes. "You like to go in here?" he asked again. He carried her coffee to where she waited. She felt the touch of his fingers when he put the necklace on for her. "The sun all right for you?" he said.

In the room she still had to imagine there were books on shelves, the vase of flowers, the pictures of castles. In a courtroom he put a case, his papers in one hand, gesturing with the other. They belonged, he said on the towpath, the rowers going by.

Downstairs something was thrown, and there was Holby's mumble, the clank of broken china when it was swept up, her mother's voice going on, her crossness exhausted as the woman's had been. He had been shamed by the woman getting things wrong and was the kind to mind. He didn't realize the woman didn't matter, that her talk and her fury didn't. He wasn't the kind to know that. He wasn't the knowing sort.

Her mother's voice was different now, caressing, lying. She sent Holby out for beer, which at this stage in the proceedings she always did; Jasmin heard him go. Her mother called up the stairs, calling her Angie, saying to come down. She didn't answer. She didn't say that Angie wasn't her name. She didn't say anything. When she went there, he would not be on the seat in the sun. He would not be waiting in the bus station. Or playing the machines. Or in the McDonald's. But when Jasmin closed her eyes again his smile was there and it didn't go away. She touched with her lips the necklace that had been his gift. She promised she would always keep it by her. ♦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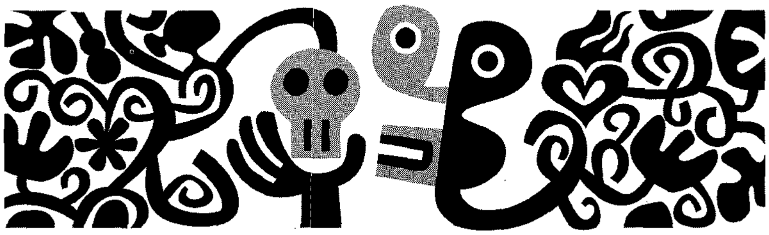


BOOKS

THE GREAT ENEMY

Philip Roth's new novel.

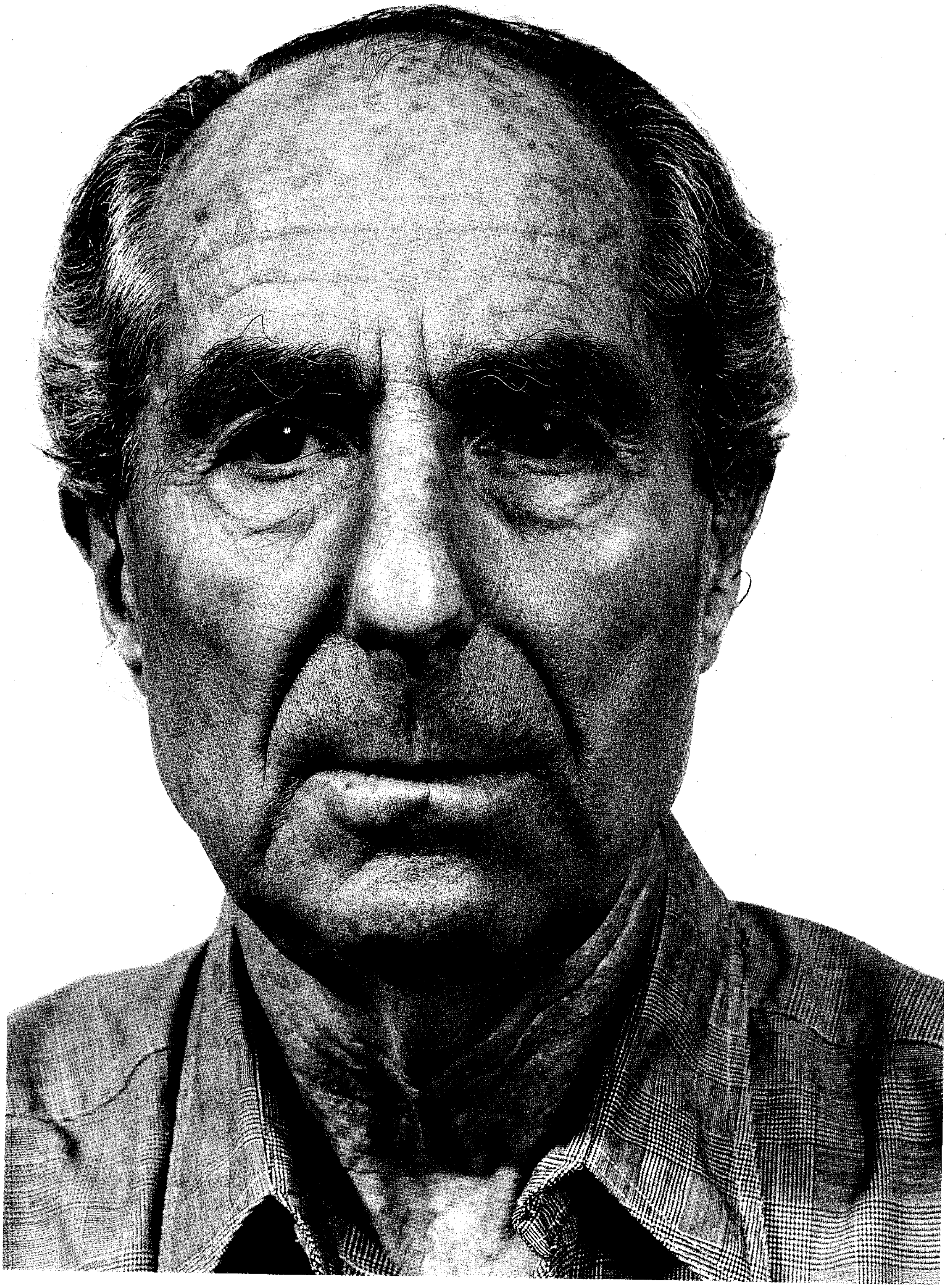
BY CLAUDIA ROTH PIERPONT

A moderate, amicable, reasonable man, fulfilling his duties to his family and society: Tolstoy famously condemned the type in "The Death of Ivan Ilych"—"Ivan Ilych's life had been most simple and most ordinary and therefore most terrible"—a judgment that Nathan Zuckerman believed to be uncharitable and suspected to be wrong. "Happy people exist too. Why shouldn't they?" asks Philip Roth's longtime alter ego, challenging Tolstoy in the early pages of "American Pastoral." Roth's 1997 novel depicts a moderate, amicable, and reasonable man assaulted by the forces of history: the all-American hero Swede Levov, whose shining moral confidence betrays not a chink through which the dark or terrible might penetrate. Maybe Tolstoy was right in regard to nineteenth-century Russia, Zuckerman admits; but in contemporary New Jersey, as far as anyone can tell from looking at Levov, ordinary lives turn out to be "just great, right in the American vein." Zuckerman soon discovers how wrong his own judgment has been. Swede Levov is destroyed precisely because of his trust in the safeguards of a respectable life. How could such a man ever be prepared for the change of luck, for the loss of control, for the physical and mental suffering that has no explanation? But then who is? "The tragedy of the man not set up for tragedy," Zuckerman concludes: "that is every man's tragedy."

Of all the subjects that Philip Roth has tackled in his career—the Jewish family, sex, American ideals, the betrayal of American ideals, political zealotry, personal identity, the list could go on and on—none have proved as inexhaustible as the human body (usually male) in its strength, its frailty, and its often ridiculous need. Over the years, the subject has undergone as many complications and elaborations as the author's body of work. Performing what would seem the most interpretatively limited of acts, thirteen-year-old Alexander Portnoy, masturbating behind the bathroom door (scandalizing readers in 1969), and aging Mickey Sabbath, masturbating over his mistress's tomb (upping the ante in 1995), are emotional worlds apart: the boy holds on to the flesh, literally, in rebellion against the life that is being forced upon him; the old man desperately holds on to the life that is being taken away. A fiercely comic shtick has become, with the passage of time, a fiercely comic shtick that is also a howl to the heavens and a profound show of grief. Of all the adversaries that this often gleefully contentious novelist has taken on (Orthodox rabbis, orthodox feminists, another list impressively long), even the most insubordinate flesh cannot evade the one that Roth—at seventy-three—has been tracking now for some time: "the adversary that is illness," as he writes in his new book, "Everyman," "and the calamity that waits in the wings." It will come as no surprise to readers of "The Anatomy Lesson" or "Sabbath's Theater" that the fortress of the body has finally been taken by the enemy.

"The Summoning of Everyman" is the full title of the fifteenth-century English morality play from which Roth has drawn his title and some of his allegorical aims. The imperious summoning is done by Death ("A great enemy," Everyman moans, "that hath me in wait"), whom the medieval dramatist provides with a choice speaking role. Although this talkative personage arrives without warning, leaving Everyman—who has passed his life in pursuit of worldly pleasures—frantically unprepared to face the final reckoning, Roth's hero is beset by the kind of modern medical warnings that keep death ever present in one's mind. The question is whether these portents have left him any better prepared. Roth begins with Everyman's end: this brief novel opens at his funeral, and goes back in time to revisit a hernia operation when he is nine, a burst appendix at thirty-four, cardiac surgery at fifty-six, and an increasingly frequent series of hospitalizations for angioplasties, the installation of heart stents, and a defibrillator. Decades of health are passed over as beside the point; there is nothing like illness to hone the consciousness. And yet, as might be expected of this least abstract of writers, Roth counters the allegorical sweep with an earthly comedy unimaginable in the book's divinely focussed predecessor—a wholly mortal, often gorgeously mundane realm that, given the absence of God in even a walk-on role, appears as the only heaven we are likely to get.

Roth adheres to precedent, however, in the nature of his hero, who is not a celebrated writer (like Zuckerman), or a teacher of literature (like Roth's other alter ego, David Kepesh), or even a man of "monumental ordinariness," like Swede Levov, but, rather, a man of strictly ordinary ordinariness: the modern Everyman is a "good boy" who longed to be an artist but, choosing instead to please his parents, married and had children and went into advertising to support them. That he eventually abandoned his wife and children—and destroyed his next marriage by having an affair—makes him all the more ordinary, as he sees it, defending himself against his abandoned sons' unappeasable anger: "He was one of the millions of American men who were party to a divorce that broke up a family. But did he beat their mother? Did he beat them? Did he fail to support their mother or



Roth's "Everyman" is a modern morality play in which sex is still battling it out with conscience. Photograph by Olaf Blecker.

fail to support them? . . . What could have been avoided?” It is initially hard to know how one is meant to take this man’s sometimes whiny excuses—he complains that his sons do not understand that “he had lost the same family they did”—particularly since Roth, in the interest of allegorical simplicity, has done without any Zuckerman-like intercessor to interpret or explain. One is left more or less on one’s own with Everyman—the character is not called by that name, but no other is supplied—who pleads his case as well as a fatally bewildered human being can.

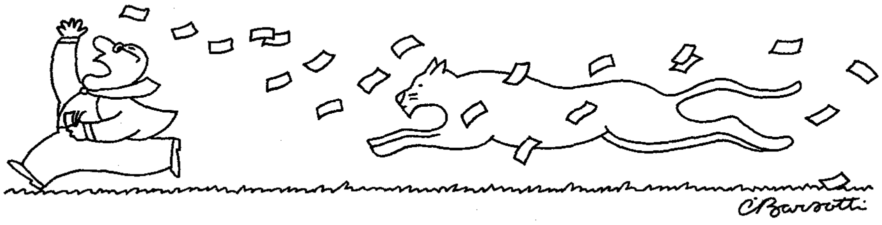
Roth has never been a particular friend to good boys. From the brash excitability of “Portnoy’s Complaint” to the combative rage of “Sabbath’s Theater,” his heroes’ drive for moral and erotic freedom—so often bound together—has inspired his wildest flights of literary voice. Roth’s Everyman is not without the baser instincts, and one is frankly relieved when, exhausted by contrition, he turns against his now middle-aged sons with a quintessentially Rothian exclamation-dotted outburst: “You wicked bastards! You sulky fuckers! You condemning little shits!” Then, too, there is the twenty-four-year-old Danish model for whose posterior “little hole” he betrays his loving second wife. In general, though, Everyman plays the straight man, a sort of basso continuo against which other, more expressive vocal lines rise. He is no match for the furious but reasoned eloquence with which his loving wife announces that she’s throwing him out, or for the death-riff brio of any number of incidental characters: the fellow handing over the sports page in a hospital waiting room who confides that he has spent a decade recovering from deaths and divorce only to find himself sick (“And that’s when I began to imagine someone coming to me and saying, ‘Now we’re going to cut off your right arm as well. Do you think you can take that?’”); or the woman who has been weeping hysterically at funerals—upset, her husband reports, by the fact that “she isn’t eighteen anymore”—for fifty years. Roth has always been a devastating mimic; these voices are immediately recognizable yet sharpened to draw blood, a gathering requiem in the vernacular.

The music of speech and the convolution of motive: we could be almost anywhere in Roth’s twenty-seven published volumes. The same for the opposition of ethics and desire: the first element of the equation has often been forgotten, along with Roth’s compulsions as a moralist, which were basic to his work long before medieval allegory caught his eye. Portnoy’s infamous complaint was neither his masturbatory inclination nor the immoderate attentions of a Jewish mother but—in the book’s quasi-medical definition—“a disorder in which strongly felt ethical and altruistic impulses are perpetually warring with extreme sexual longings.” The real struggle, Portnoy wails, is to “be bad—and to enjoy it!” Roth’s Everyman, despite the benefits of experience (like Roth, he was born in 1933), suffers from much the same complaint. In this modern morality play, sex is still battling it out with a conscience as demanding as a medieval God. If the welcome news is that the body, to the very end, will not renounce its animating claims, what comes as a shock in this latest work—what makes it seem indeed a late work, corporeally humbled—is the devastating price there is to pay.

“Listen to Uncle Shmuck, will you? Things come and go, and you have got to be a receptacle, let them pass right through,” an elder wise man advises one of the twentysomething heroes of Roth’s first novel, “Letting Go.” Published in 1962, this early work was recently reissued by the Library of America, in the first of eight projected volumes—two have been released so far—that will include Roth’s entire œuvre by 2013. (There will have to be an extension for works written after he turns eighty.) “Otherwise death will be a misery for you, boy,” the philosophical counsellor warns. “Wait and accept and learn to pull the hand away. *Don’t clutch!*” Of course, the young man can’t keep himself from clutching—at everything he takes for life—or he wouldn’t be in need of such advice. Roth himself was twenty-nine when he published “Letting Go,” a long and overtly Jamesian novel in which a finespun literary drama inspired by the works of the Master is sporadically violated (and enlivened) by scenes out of an overtly Jewish literary vaudeville that point to the works of the Meister still to emerge. This first novel feels, in fact, like the work of an older, far more conventional writer than Roth had started out as, just a few years before, with the stories of “Goodbye, Columbus” (which share the Library of America volume), or than he was again to become—“Portnoy” roars onto the scene in Volume II—although at times his genuine youth does shine through. “I’m past fifty,” Uncle Shmuck offers his skeptical nephew as a guarantee of wisdom. “Nearing the end.”

Tenderness and nostalgia, however unlikely, are present almost from authorial infancy—“How do you keep life going,” another twentyish hero of “Letting Go” frets, “exactly as it was when you were ten years old?” The need to hang on is nearly as urgent as the need to escape from the all-giving, all-consuming family, and from the determinedly respectable post-immigrant Jewish world it represents. Even the most ruthless farce of such constricting family life—“Jew Jew Jew Jew Jew Jew!” the adolescent Alexander Portnoy decries the boundaries of his parents’ world; “I happen also to be a human being!”—is laced with a tenderness that more than holds its own. This is not the aspect of “Portnoy’s Complaint” that made Roth famous virtually overnight, but, now that the dirty laundry has been airing for thirty-seven years and the cause of Portnoy’s distress (while no less funny) has taken on a nearly historical dimension in the annals of Jewish anxiety, the familial affection is startlingly vivid—if, for Portnoy, just another aspect of the engulfing threat. There is his mother’s housewifely magic, the cleaning and the polishing and the jello in which sliced peaches miraculously defy the law of gravity; his father’s struggle to earn a living despite his lack of education and the crushing bias of Protestant America; the way his mother talks (“The first line of poetry I ever hear! And I remember it!”); his father walking with him on Sundays (“I can’t go off to the country and find an acorn on the ground without thinking of him”). In sum, or, rather, in teetering balance with the hysterical rage of Portnoy the grownup psychiatric patient, there is “everything I remember with pleasure—I mean with a rapturous, biting sense of loss!”

It would not be hard to trace similar veins of nearly ecstatic affection running



"Damn it, name a figure, name a figure."

through the works of the "savage satirist of American letters" (as Nathan Zuckerman is dubbed, when—in "Zuckerman Unbound"—he turns out to have written a book uncommonly like "Portnoy"). Even so, in more recent years personal tenderness has reached a new intensity: with Roth's autobiographical essay "The Facts" (1988) and the story of his father's death, in "Patrimony" (1991); with Mickey Sabbath's aching memories of summers on the Jersey shore; and certainly with Roth's last book, "The Plot Against America," in which a family of working-class Newark Jews—the Roths—are caught in a fascist drama that legitimatizes all the Old World fears that drove young Portnoy to the couch, and that gives their simple decency a chance to expand into outright heroism, both physical and moral. Yet none of this holds a candle to the incandescent familial regard of "Everyman." This is a book in which the narrator, finding that his deepest pleasure derives from visiting his parents' graves, realizes that "the tenderness was out of control."

Everyman may not have a name, but his older brother is called Howie, and he is perfect: healthy, strong, a self-made millionaire, affable, generous, a terrific husband, father, and brother who is also an exceptional athlete, playing both water polo and polo on a pony—a man truly out of an allegory, or a fairy tale. And the women in the book are even better. "When he is sick, every man wants his mother," Roth wrote in "The Anatomy Lesson." "If she's not around, other women must do." Here the hero is sick much of the time, and "Everyman" is filled with loyal post-op heroines waiting for the anesthesia to wear off. First, of course, there is his mother ("She was what calmed his apprehension and allowed him to be brave") and then, in turn, his almost equally caring second wife, Phoebe ("whose soft appearance belied her equanimity and steadfastness"), and his Cordelia-like daughter, Nancy ("There are such people, spectacularly good people—miracles, really—and it was his great fortune that one of these miracles was his own incorruptible daughter"). Contrary to his reputation, Roth has been writing memorable female characters since he started out—the Library of America volumes offer numerous examples (even if one refuses to sexually reclassify the man who turns into a giant breast). His most heartfelt love story, "Sabbath's Theater," presents a heroine who is over fifty and (slightly) overweight but who, more important, is both sexually rapacious and spiritually pure, traits that Roth manages to make seem naturally allied. This is not often the case with Roth—this is not often the case with anyone—but in "Everyman" Roth seems determined to prove that sex and love are cripplingly irreconcilable, and that the center of life that is adult love does not hold.

Because the other sort of woman is here as well: a nineteen-year-old secretary with whom Everyman—or, as he is at the moment, Everyboss—engages in some speedy sex on the office floor; and she of the "little hole," with whom our hero is spending a sneak weekend when his wife unexpectedly phones to tell him that his mother has had a stroke. His mother dies just before he manages to get home, and his marriage ends just afterward, prompting the stunning realization that "he had lost the two women whose devotion had been the underpinning of his strength." And gained what, in their place? There is some good old-fashioned Rothian naughtiness about buggering his eager and well-pleased young mistress and, later on, some poignant reflections about the deeper lure of a sexual affair—"the last great outburst of everything"—when age has more or less removed it from reach. In regard to his ruined marriage, there is even the not so bad excuse that he had not slept with his wife in years. But neither the excuses nor the pleasures add up to much. The scales of gain and loss do not remotely balance. His brief marriage to the young model quickly degenerates into farce (one is actually grateful, among all these worthy heroines, to read of a completely superficial woman—or, at least, one who is not willing to play nurse). And so it happens that, facing the end of his life, Everyman is left alone.

"The worst of being unbearably alone was that you had to bear it—either that or you were sunk," he muses. "You had to work hard to prevent your mind from sabotaging you by its looking hungrily back at the superabundant past." But the hungry backward glance is what this book is all about. It explains the impossible goodness of so many of the characters. Roth's Everyman is not imperceptive or naïve but helplessly under the spell of mortality: no radical insights, no celestial harmonies, only an unrelenting awareness of unalterable mistakes, an amalgam of bad conscience, gratitude, memory, and longing. Roth has written before about what such a state of mind does to our estimation of others, about the high-pitched admiration that takes hold (as he wrote in "American Pastoral") in the limousine travelling behind the hearse. In the early nineteen-eighties, he noted in an interview how astonishingly few great works of fiction have been written about illness and disease: "Cancer Ward," "The Magic Mountain," "The Death of Ivan Ilych," "Malone Dies"—virtually nothing compared with the number of works about, say, adultery. Since then, he has gone some way toward evening the score (despite the points he's racked up for adultery). "Everyman" is a comparatively slight work—or, perhaps, an adjunct work—more akin to "The Dying Animal" than to Roth's complex variations on the theme, and even, at times, in its exposed sentiment, closer to "Our Town" than to the dour European works that he invoked. Yet in its bright allegorical explicitness "Everyman" takes a distinctive place among the books in which Roth has by now often posed the essential question—the question that, in "Patrimony," he imagines his eighty-six-year-old father demanding of his doctor, after bartering for two more years, then four, then finally eighty-six more years of life: Why should a man die at all?

America and Philip Roth grew up together. Roth has emphasized the fact that he never doubted his status as an all-American kid, a happily obsessed mitt-owning member of the "great secular nationalistic church" of baseball, "from which nobody had ever seemed to suggest that Jews should be excluded." Nevertheless, as the son of a Jewish family living on a Jewish block in a predominantly Jewish section of Newark—fully aware of the aspects of life from which Jews were excluded—he suspected that "America" (as in: Mark Twain, Sinclair Lewis, Thomas Wolfe) was to be found somewhere else. He went off to college in rural Pennsylvania, amid the cornfields and the Gentiles, to see if he could find it there. And he has tracked the country's social coördinates ever since, if not always in traditional form, particularly after baseball gave way to sex as a growing boy's favorite sport. Alexander Portnoy's famed pursuit of that indigenous yellow-haired creature the shiksa was in substantial part an attempt to discover—more, to possess—America: "as though my manifest destiny is to seduce a girl from each of the forty-eight states." ("As for Alaskan and Hawaiian women," he appends, "I really have no feelings either way.")

To be sure, Roth has been a forceful critic (even a "savage satirist") of American life and history: the McCarthy era, Richard Nixon, Vietnam, and straight on down to our current age of phony piety. But, on a parallel path, beginning with his return, in the late nineteen-eighties, from an unnerving long-term residence in England—where he reports that he personally encountered anti-Semitism for the first time, and where he missed the outspoken energies and immigrant-fuelled liveliness of home—Roth published book after book ("Sabbath's Theater," "American Pastoral," "The Plot Against America") showing that he believed he knew, and that he deeply loved, what this country was fundamentally about: the liberal ideals that had been fought for during the Second World War, when, as he explained to a European interviewer, "*America* discovered itself as America." The fact that this was also the era of Roth's early youth—and that his return was shortly followed by his father's fatal illness—seems to have made it clear, when he looked back, that a Jewish block in Newark had been not only "America" but very nearly Paradise.

"Everyman" shifts the site of bliss a few miles south, to Elizabeth, where the brothers experience "life perpetual in their father-created Eden," specifically in the modest jewelry store their father established in 1933—on the birth of his younger son—where the boys put in many cloudless hours after school. All of the era's working-class drive and expectations are represented by this store, which also provides for some charmingly inevitable business about watches and clocks (Proust never hit on anything quite so simple for suggesting *le temps perdu*). Autobiographically, our most accomplished novelist—in strictly quantifiable terms, Roth has won two National Book Awards, two National Book Critics Circle Awards, two PEN/Faulkner Awards, and a Pulitzer Prize—has little in common with his hero, but Roth (who is also, of course, our most autobiographical novelist) has provided even Everyman with familiar elements of his life, principally the series of medical crises, detailed in "The Facts," that have shaped his own awareness of mortality, and perhaps of writing as a means of warding it off. Equally familiar is an argument between father and son over a Hasidic diamond merchant who comes to do business, the young Everyman protesting, "They were now in America, free to dress and to shave and to behave as they wished." Despite these predictable objections and the hero's earnest secularity, one of the remarkable aspects of Roth's rewriting of a Christian allegory—we have come a long way from Portnoy's outraged "I am a human being!"—is how plainly unexceptional he should make it seem that this American Everyman is a Jew.

Like so many of the privileges of American society, however, the right of a historic outsider to grow up to be dully conventional has been inherited from a father who tirelessly adapted to the land that accords such wondrous rights. Roth's most striking allegorical gesture, disguised as the operation of the family store, pays tribute to a generation's unparalleled gift—so apparently calculating and so genuinely innocent—for turning abstract ideals into everyday life:

> To lure Elizabeth's big working-class population and to avoid alienating or frightening away the port city's tens of thousands of churchgoing Christians with his Jewish name, he extended credit freely—just made sure they paid at least thirty or forty percent down. He never checked their credit...and the good will generated by his flexibility was more than worth it. He decorated the shop with a few silver-plated pieces to make it attractive—tea sets, trays, chafing dishes, candlesticks that he sold dirt cheap—and at Christmastime he always had a snow scene with Santa in the window, but the stroke of genius was to call the business not by his name but rather Everyman's Jewelry Store, which was how it was known throughout Union County to the swarms of ordinary people who were his faithful customers until he sold his inventory to the wholesaler and retired at the age of seventy-three.

Whatever you call yourself, whatever you strive for, you will become: this is America. Or, at least, it is a vision of America, one that Roth's personal hero, Saul Bellow, boldly set out with Augie March's introductory phrase: "I am an American, Chicago born"—six momentous words that, as Roth has pointed out, Bellow's son of Jewish immigrants issues without apology or ethnic hyphenation. ("That epithet American-Jewish writer has no meaning for me," Roth has informed those critics who attempt to divide our literature into tribal schools. "If I'm not an American, I'm nothing.") Bellow died in 2005, and, if there is a hint of valedictory farewell in "Everyman," Roth's book is in touch not with unquenchable Augie but with Bellow's final, death-obsessed volume, "Ravelstein," with its wincing tribute to "Ivan Ilych" ("Reading that story is like crossing a mountain of broken glass"), and its bemused inquiry into whether anyone—even a Jewish atheist-materialist, too smart for illusions—can ever really believe that the grave is all there is.

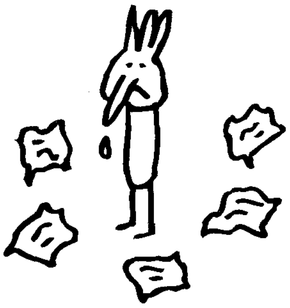
The climax of "Everyman" takes place in a run-down cemetery in New Jersey, just off the turnpike. We have been here before. Roth drove here accidentally, in "Patrimony"—accidentally arriving at his mother's grave and, beside it, the plot reserved for his father—after missing a fork in the road on his way to Elizabeth, where his father was living in those years, and where he was en route to tell him of the brain tumor that was going to kill him. "Well, Ma..." Roth relates that he began speaking aloud, once he had decided to stay at the cemetery awhile, and he ponders the banality of one's thinking in such places, thinking that never differs much from Hamlet's as he contemplates the skull of Yorick—even if the language doesn't quite compare. There are so many things one can do at a grave to try to make the dead seem present again: ask for forgiveness, ask for love, pull the weeds, trace the letters on the tombstone, even crazier things if no one is watching. But, Roth warns, you still walk away without the people you came for; all that these gestures prove, for someone like him, is that the dead are truly gone. And so he said nothing more to his mother that day, since it was too hard not to know that no one heard.

There is a gravedigger working in the cemetery this time, an easygoing man willing to explain the mechanics of the job—a seven-foot spike to probe the spot, a wood frame to shape it, an edger to keep it neat—which is the nearest he can come to explaining its mysteries. But Roth makes an extraordinary gift to the ordinary man who cannot stop asking questions, and who cannot walk away. Standing at his parents' grave, Everyman also speaks a few words aloud: "I'm seventy-one. Your boy is seventy-one"—as might be expected, the words are hardly eloquent, not remotely a prayer, the plain expression of a common (if astounding) fact. Yet he seems not at all surprised when his parents reply. "Look back and atone for what you can atone for," his father advises—coming close for a moment to the language of the medieval play—"and make the best of what you have left." The hero feels released from fear, although, as it turns out, he has almost no time left. This is not giving the story away: it was in this cemetery, at his graveside, that it began. Unlike the play, in which God's mercy ultimately leads Everyman to eternal life, Roth's book offers no comfort. Nor is there a parting moral. There are just the mother's words, warm with the only satisfaction to be had. "Good," she replies to her boy, an old man himself now and about to die. "You lived." ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

Apex Hides the Hurt, *by Colson Whitehead (Doubleday; $22.95).* The nameless narrator of Whitehead's trenchantly funny and moral third novel is a melancholic "nomenclature consultant," who devises names for such products as Apex, a bandage sold in an array of skin tones. Flashbacks from his professional heyday are spliced into present-day scenes that show him trapped in the small town of Winthrop, deciding whether its name should be changed to Freedom (the name given it by liberated ex-slaves) or New Prospera (the brainchild of a software tycoon). Whitehead deftly cloaks his cynical take on race and consumer culture in his narrator's earnest philosophizing. He and the narrator are obsessed with the power of language both to deceive, as in the satirically observed evasions of marketing-speak, and to soothe: "Shuttle bus shuttle bus sounded like leaves whispering to each other in your textbook primordial glen. . . . He was feeling better already."

End of Story, *by Peter Abrahams (William Morrow; $24.95).* Abrahams' craftily plotted novels don't quite fit the "thriller" label, and his characters, too, have a way of defying the genre. Here his appealing heroine, a plucky young woman named Ivy Seidel, tends bar by night, but her ambition is to be a writer. (A not entirely realistic subplot starts with an enigmatic rejection letter from *The New Yorker.*) When Ivy takes a job teaching writing to inmates at a North Country prison, she witnesses mayhem and murder, and also encounters an inmate who may possess enormous literary talent. Ivy is convinced that the man has pleaded guilty to a crime he never committed, and she's determined to learn why. Abrahams' plot negotiates all sorts of twists, and one watches the progress of his heroine with increasing sympathy and alarm.



A Perfect Union, *by Catherine Allgor (Henry Holt; $30).* Once she married the much older James Madison, in 1794, Dolley Madison became a celebrity of the founding generation—popular but polarizing. Her enemies circulated rumors that Thomas Jefferson had sold her sexual services, and they attacked her as "Queen Dolley" for her aristocratic pretensions. But Allgor's sympathetic biography argues that, as the architect of Washington's social scene, Dolley gave the new republic the forum it needed for the development of an indigenous political culture. If Allgor occasionally overreaches—Dolley's drawing room, she says, "changed the course of the republican experiment"—she captures Dolley's charisma and her essential role in the politics of her time. Charles Pinckney, the loser in the 1808 election, was, he wrote, "beaten by Mr. and Mrs. Madison." He added, "I might have had a better chance had I faced Mr. Madison alone."

Send in the Idiots, *by Kamran Nazeer (Bloomsbury; $23.95).* In the early nineteen-eighties, Nazeer was enrolled in a New York school for autistic children, and this innovative examination of autism is structured as a series of encounters with former classmates, through whose stories he sketches various aspects of the condition. Not surprisingly, those who participated are near the high-functioning end of the spectrum, but Nazeer shows that such normalcy is hard-won and precarious, as in the case of a man whose autistic communication habits make him an outstanding political speechwriter but hinder him in job interviews. Nazeer's own accomplishments—he has a Ph.D. and now works in the British civil service—have caused him to question his diagnosis. Nonetheless, his memorable writing style, humorous but stripped of all subjectivity ("Relationships are complex, not susceptible to rule governance or local coherence"), is superbly adapted to convey something of an autistic's world view.

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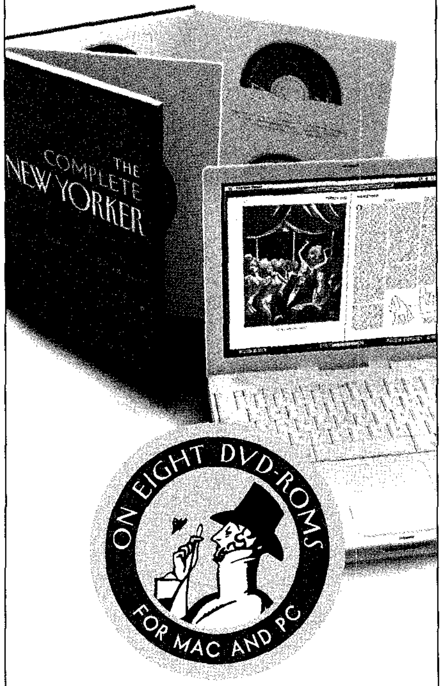

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The Dixie Chicks' new album.

BY SASHA FRERE-JONES

Though country music is beloved by conservatives—its songs mention God as often as they do whiskey—it isn't a partisan genre; it's political by nature. Garth Brooks defended gay rights in the song "We Shall Be Free," in 1992, at the height of his career; Toby Keith's 2002 hit "Courtesy of the Red, White, and Blue (The Angry American)" crammed a year's worth of jingoist anger and fear into three and a quarter minutes, culminating in the phrase " 'Cause we'll put a boot in your ass, it's the American way." In 2003, ten days before the invasion of Iraq, Natalie Maines, the lead singer of the Texan band the Dixie Chicks, one of the biggest-selling acts in the history of country music, told an audience in London, "Just so you know, we're ashamed the President of the United States is from Texas." The remark scandalized many Americans, but it was in keeping with country music's tradition of unvarnished opinions.

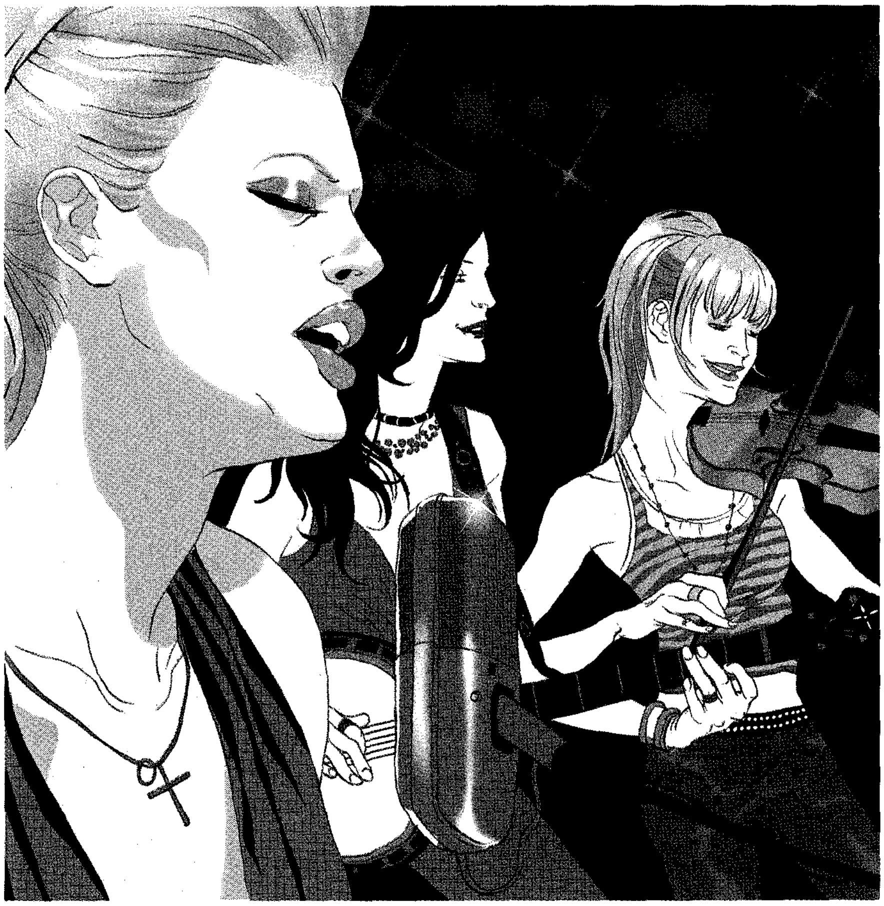
Soon after the show, the Dixie Chicks—Maines and two skilled musicians, the sisters Emily Robison (on banjo) and Martie Maguire (on fiddle)—began receiving death threats. Radio stations dropped their songs, and, in a quaint throwback to the days when John Lennon claimed that the Beatles were "more popular than Jesus," the group's CDs were stomped to bits and bulldozed. Keith, one of country's most popular male singers, whose song "Angry American" Maines had called "ignorant," performed in front of a photo manipulated to show her entwined with Saddam Hussein. Maines responded by appearing at a music-awards ceremony in a T-shirt bearing the unmysterious abbreviation "F.U.T.K."

In some quarters, this kind of sparring is called conversation, and before 2003 the Dixie Chicks' natural candor—reflected in sassy songs about women who don't suffer wishy-washy men—had worked to their advantage. As one track from their album "Wide Open Spaces" put it, "If you're gonna say goodbye, don't take all day and night, let 'er rip—let it fly." One of the songs that transformed the band from country big to plain old big was the 1999 single "Goodbye Earl," a comic track about finishing off an abusive husband with a plate of poisoned black-eyed peas. Four years later, in London, after Maines made her infamous remark, the Dixie Chicks played "Travelin' Soldier," a song about a G.I. who writes love letters to a girl he met just before he left home for Vietnam—where he dies. In March, the group released "Not Ready to Make Nice," the first single from their new album, "Taking the Long Way." The song is being promoted as a response to what the Dixie Chicks refer to as "the incident," and it is presumably intended as a sign that the new album, which will be released next month, aims to be as cheeky as their earlier work.

"Not Ready to Make Nice" alternates sparse verses in a minor key with a bumptious chorus, in which Maines doubles the pace of her singing, neatly suggesting a rising temper: "It's too late to make it right, I probably wouldn't if I could, 'cause I'm mad as hell, can't bring myself to do what it is you think I should." The song would be a fine riposte to a bossy lover. But why isn't Maines singing about Iraq?

Even before the incident, the Dixie Chicks had started to stray from mainstream country. In 2001, they got into a legal dispute with Sony, their record label, and before the case was resolved they recorded an album's worth of acoustic bluegrass numbers, unsure how, or whether, the songs would be released. In 2002, after settling with the Chicks, Sony released the album, "Home," and it yielded the highest-charting singles of the group's career. The biggest hit, though, wasn't country or bluegrass; it was a cover of Fleetwood Mac's "Landslide," a mournful ballad about overwhelming love. The rest of the songs from "Home" more closely resembled the traditional bluegrass numbers on the unexpectedly popular soundtrack from "O Brother, Where Art Thou?" than they did any of the material on the band's previous two blockbusters, "Wide Open Spaces" and "Fly."

Like the majority of country albums, these were written by, or co-written with, professional songwriters (eighteen people are credited on "Fly") and performed with the help of studio musicians. Maines's twangy bazooka of a voice set the band apart, and she presented herself as a confident woman battling social convention. "Ready to Run," from "Fly" (1999), for example, depicts domesticity as imprisonment: "When my momma says I look good in white, I'm gonna be ready this time, oh yeah—ready, ready, ready. . . ready to run." Even "Long Time Gone," the first single from "Home," though stripped of the zoomy drums and guitars of the earlier records, was a defiant song about a woman who leaves her family's home (and possibly shacks up with another woman, depending on how you interpret the pronouns).



The Dixie Chicks' new album has formal beauty but few of country's taut one-liners.

TOMER HANUKA

The bluegrass music on "Home" implied that the Dixie Chicks were ambivalent about the sound that had made them stars; "Taking the Long Way" makes it explicit that they want to change in a fundamental way. The album was produced by Rick Rubin, who made his reputation working with hip-hop and hard-rock acts, and almost all of the backing musicians are members of famous rock bands, including Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers and the Red Hot Chili Peppers. Most of the songs are played on acoustic instruments, which accounts for the album's relaxed pace and airy sound; the press release plausibly cites soft rock like the Eagles and the Mamas and the Papas as inspirations.

The most telling difference, though, is that the Dixie Chicks are listed as co-writers on all of the songs. (Some of their collaborators are Keb' Mo', Sheryl Crow, and Gary Louris, of the country-rock band the Jayhawks.) This desire for control is understandable, but it requires the band to match the combined efforts of a team of people who have spent their careers writing country music—the plainspoken, almost always funny, storytelling songs that have made Nashville pop such a consistent pleasure for the past fifteen years.

Few pop performers sing in harmony as sweetly as do Maines, Robison, and Maguire. On the album's charming opener, "The Long Way Around," the trio ably mimics the spun-sugar vocals of Fleetwood Mac, while Maines reprises the familiar Dixie Chicks theme of leaving a small town for big things: she sings about choosing not to be like her friends who "married their high-school boyfriends," deciding instead to tour with a band "in a pink R.V. with stars on the ceiling." On the whole, however, "Taking the Long Way" is long on formal beauty and short on concrete details and taut one-liners. Why do the lyrics for "I Hope," a weak-kneed gospel song that is one of the album's only musically timid numbers, touch on spousal abuse only to conclude that "it's O.K. for us to disagree, we can work it out lovingly"? Why is "So Hard," a song about infertility, so vague? ("It felt like a given, something a woman's born to do, a natural ambition to see a reflection of me and you.")

It's a shame that the Chicks' words fail them, because they get so much else right. "Baby Hold On" makes up for obvious lyrics about an aging romance ("we might never live those days gone by, but we can try") with a plaintive verse and a leaping chorus. The chord changes in "Silent House," which describes a house that lacks a permanent occupant, move in a slow arc against harmonized vocals that shift subtly between minor and major passages. For lesser artists, an album this harmonically confident would be a coup. But in the case of the Dixie Chicks it's disappointing, like watching Muhammad Ali hurt a man's feelings.

What's missing from "Not Ready to Make Nice" and the album's other lovely but overly impressionistic songs are the straightforward lyrics of a professional Nashville songwriter like Dennis Linde, who wrote "Goodbye Earl" for the Chicks (as well as "Burning Love" for Elvis Presley in 1972). Linde's song presses specifics into quick couplets: Wanda and Mary Anne were "the best of friends all through their high-school days, both members of the 4-H club, both active in the F.F.A.," until Wanda's husband, Earl, walked "right through that restraining order and put her in intensive care." Mary Anne flies in from Atlanta and "she held Wanda's hand as they worked out a plan and it didn't take them long to decide that Earl had to die." Now, those are fighting words. ♦

ON TELEVISION

HOME AND AWAY

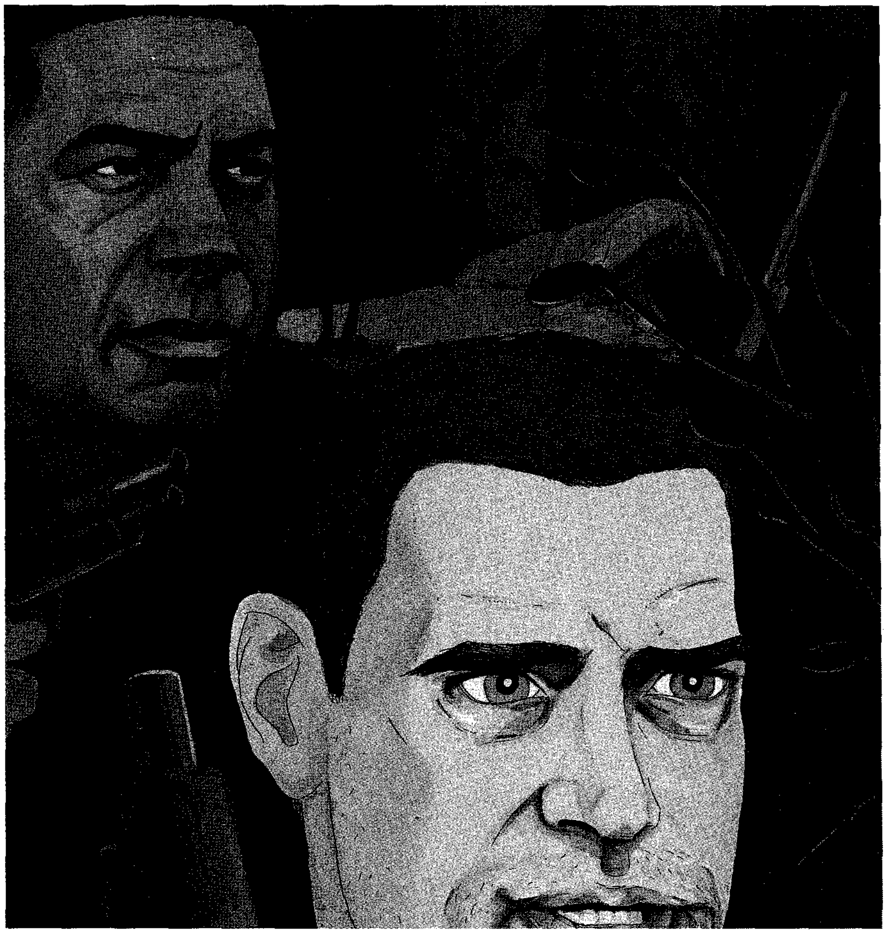
David Mamet goes to war with "The Unit."

BY NANCY FRANKLIN

It's hard to believe that CBS's new Tuesday-night military drama "The Unit" is the playwright David Mamet's first real foray into television; he has written, directed, or produced TV movies and a couple of episodes of other people's shows, but this series is the first one that he has created. Hard to believe both because you feel as if you'd heard Mametspeak a million times on TV, for better (in "The Sopranos," in the back-room patter of the second-stringers playing cards and jockeying for position) and for worse (in the self-consciously dark dialogue of the "C.S.I." shows and all the other body-bag dramas), and because the form seems like a natural for him. And so it has turned out to be; wisely, Mamet hooked up with Shawn Ryan, the creator of "The Shield," who is Mamet's co-executive producer and a writer for the show. "The Shield" is one of the best dramas of recent years (Mamet directed an episode in 2004), and it features a number of characters—such as the brutal, morally compromised strike-team leader played by Michael Chiklis—who may not be completely conscious of the power of language but are well versed in the language of power, which is what Mamet wields so well. And that language is nowhere more exquisitely euphemistic than in the military, where the jargon includes such gems of evasion as "collateral damage" and "neutralize," and where the combination of life-threatening work and close quarters gives rise to the kind of slang men use when they slap each other on the back or come to blows—the kind of talk that is common in Mamet's signature works.

The drama in "The Unit" is twofold (at least): the show takes place in the bubble of the Army's covert special-operations team—a bubble that could pop in the field if the wives back home didn't do their part to keep the team's secrets. (There are no husbands back home, because there are no women in the Special Forces.) The reality, though, is that the wives never actually know what secrets they're keeping—they never know where their husbands are. All they know is that either they're home or they're deployed. Period. They don't even know the magnitude of the lies they're telling—in one instance, a wife says to someone that her husband's in St. Louis, and in the next shot we see him in Afghanistan. The wives aren't the only ones who are in the dark; the very existence of the unit their husbands belong to isn't acknowledged by the military or the United States government. If "The Unit" has an air of authenticity—the air being the only part of the authenticity that, in this case, a civilian can speak to—it's because it's based on a 2002 book by a former member of the Special Forces, Eric L. Haney, called "Inside Delta Force." Haney says that Delta Force, whose official name is 1st Special Forces Operational Detachment-Delta, is always referred to by its members simply as "the unit." (It's surely a coincidence that the word "unit," in addition to being an unremarkable, standard term for a military grouping, is also slang for the male genitalia, but in this context it's a rather happy one.)

The leader of the team the show focusses on is already a familiar face to many: he is played by Dennis Haysbert, who was President David Palmer on "24" for four seasons. (Palmer was assassinated within the first ten minutes of the fifth-season opener, three months ago.) Haysbert brought authority to the "24" part, not least with his height and his deep voice, and gained even more during his run on the show; some of that moral stature clings to him here, in the role of Sergeant Jonas Blane—viewers may be somewhat less inclined to question his decisions and his actions out in the field. There are


Dennis Haysbert and Scott Foley as members of the Army's secret élite.

LARA TOMLIN

four others on the team, though so far only two of them have played much of a role in the series, which began in early March: Mack (Max Martini), a veteran of the unit, and Bob (Scott Foley, of "Felicity"), who joins at the beginning of the series and has to prove himself worthy—a tricky thing to do, as we find out when Jonas criticizes him for trying too hard, something that can lead to poor judgment, danger, and death. The other two men on the team are Hector (Demore Barnes) and Charles (Michael Irby), whose names it is difficult to recall even after you've seen eight episodes. Irby's character tends to come in handy when the unit needs an "ethnic" cover—he can start up a soccer game with a bunch of Latinos near a suspicious warehouse, if need be, and need does be in one episode.

Jonas is the lead dog of the pack, and his wife, Molly (Regina Taylor), is the alpha female on the home front, but the man holding both leashes is Colonel Tom Ryan, the commander of the unit and the de-facto commander of his men's families. Ryan is played by Robert Patrick (he was an F.B.I. agent in the last two seasons of "The X Files"), who cuts a trim, taut, impressive figure of a military man; the first time you see him in full dress uniform, in a meeting at the White House, your instinct is to push the bag of Doritos off your lap and snap to attention. His very humorlessness is part of his charisma. Colonel Ryan answers only to the President—a setup that creates lots of opportunities for one-upping F.B.I. agents and State Department officials around the world. You find yourself invariably siding with the unit in these disputes—just as viewers often do with Chiklis's character, Vic Mackey, in "The Shield," who gets the job done by any means necessary, even if those means, which include battering witnesses and killing innocent people, are indefensible.

"The Unit" ventures as far afield as Afghanistan, the Serengeti, Lebanon, and Spain, and there are episodes involving the attempted assassination of a Mexican drug minister who's visiting Los Angeles, and a Russian diplomat who's possibly engaged in selling nuclear technology to Iran during a meeting in Beirut, but in most of the story lines the question for the team—as in "24"—is how to get in, kill whoever needs to be killed, and get out again. The problems are practical and tactical, not political. Often in "The Unit," your attention is caught by the look of a scene—the glaring light of the desert, say—or by the language, sometimes terse, sometimes flowery, always blunt. When one of the wives asks Colonel Ryan if her husband is missing, he says, "He's late," and gives a small nod—an answer that isn't really an answer. Jonas, interrogating a for-hire assassin, says to him, "If my questions don't produce the truth, other accommodations, less pleasant—you understand me?—can be arranged." In the episode that runs this week, the focus shifts, pulls back, and, for the first time in the series, viewers are forced to confront some of the ugliest truths about the way the United States has conducted its war on terror. The five men are tricked into thinking they're visiting a facility near their base to train soldiers; instead, they're there to be subjected to the kinds of interrogation tactics that our own armed forces have carried out for several years, at Abu Ghraib and at Guantánamo Bay. A sadistic military doctor conducts experiments on them to determine whether they are fit for certain missions—whether they would crack under the physical and emotional stress. It's not pretty, and, for network TV, it's powerful.

Back home, the atmosphere isn't can-do; it's can't-do. Molly monitors the wives' behavior, both directly and without their knowledge. When one of them questions some of Molly's dictates by citing Army regulations, Molly says, "You aren't in the Army. You're in the unit." In ways that are sometimes sinister (almost unbelievably so—are Army wives really this scary?), Molly makes it clear that the wives' role is to support their men. But who are these men? Their jobs don't just take a toll on them—their jobs take *them*. When the men are home, they're on hold, waiting for the next mission, and occasionally lashing out at their spouses. They can't share their lives with anyone—not with their families, and not even, ultimately, with their fellow team members. If they're separated from one another during an assignment, each has to make his way home alone. There are no apparent rewards for this life; it just is. Molly says, at one point, that the life of the soldiers and their wives is "the history of the world." It is also, unfortunately, the story of the way we live now. ♦

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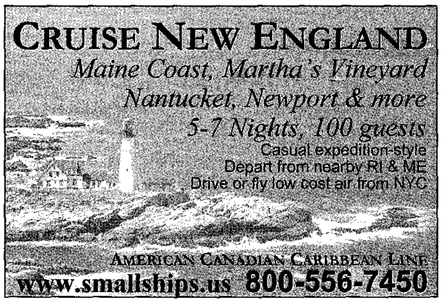

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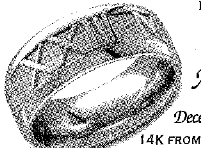

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THE THEATRE

HIT AND MISS

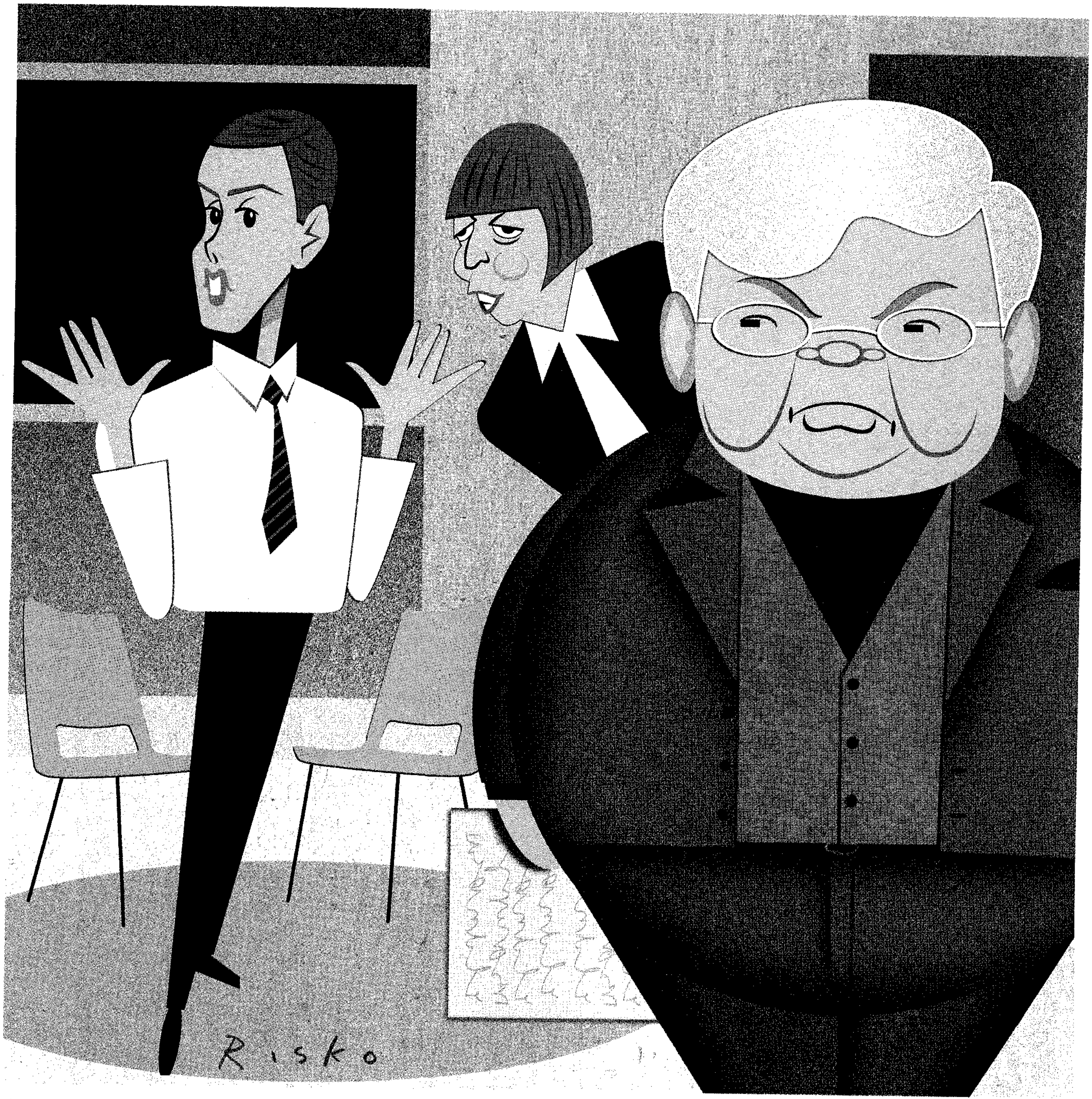
"The History Boys" and "The Threepenny Opera."

BY JOHN LAHR

"How do I define history?" asks one of the grammar-school highfliers cramming for their Oxbridge exams in Alan Bennett's "The History Boys" (London's National Theatre production, now at the Broadhurst, under the superb direction of Nicholas Hytner). "It's just one fucking thing after another." The joke is typical of Bennett's mischievous wit. Bennett began his adult life as a medieval historian at Oxford; by the age of twenty-seven, he was making his own history. As one of the quartet of Merry-Andrews whose revue "Beyond the Fringe" (1961) changed the shape of postwar British comedy—and remains one of the few comic imports to survive the transplant to Broadway—Bennett was an owlish bundle of neurotic tics, hiding his wicked tongue behind a show of tentativeness. Nowadays, the clown in Bennett contends with the codger, and "The History Boys" brings him back to Broadway in the fullness of his talent and his command. At seventy-one, he is not only one of Britain's most popular storytellers onstage and onscreen; he is the iconic voice of its comic disenchantment, charting the spiritual attrition of the country's concessions to the marketplace and to modernism. Bennett, a butcher's son from Leeds, is a kind of laureate of loss and littleness. "It's a little life," his mother used to say, a line that is echoed in "The History Boys" by the rambunctious general-studies teacher Hector (Richard Griffiths, in a performance as huge as his girth), whose love of knowledge for its own sake is forced to take a back seat to the glib methods of another teacher, Irwin (Stephen Campbell Moore), who is hired to get exam results. At one point, Hector, after watching his workhorses being put through their paces for the Oxbridge interviews, invokes the poet Frances Cornford's words to describe them. "Magnificently unprepared/For the long littleness of life," he says.

In Bob Crowley's suggestively minimal classroom, with posters for "Casablanca," "Citizen Kane," and "La Dolce Vita" pinned up on the walls, these gleeful grinds who have done well on their A-levels—"those longed-for emblems of your conformity," as Hector calls them—are in search of a passport to the good life; Hector, with his erudite badinage, entices them instead to a life of the mind. His classroom is a sort of ravishing intellectual revue: the students are called upon to recite poetry, to improvise scenes using the subjunctive and conditional forms of French verbs, to act out classic movie scenes, even to sing popular songs. At least three times during the evening, Scripps (Jamie Parker) sits at the piano and accompanies Posner (the compelling Samuel Barnett), as he sings, among other things, a fetching rendition of "Bewitched, Bothered, and Bewildered."

Posner, who has unrequited feelings for the cocky class Lothario, Dakin (Dominic Cooper), gives the Lorenz Hart lyrics an incidentally appropriate reading, as he intones, "I'll sing to him/Each spring to him/And worship the trousers that cling to him." Posner is Bennett's surrogate. ("Watching Sam Barnett playing the part, I wince to hear my own voice at sixteen," he writes in his introduction to the play.) Posner's sexual confusion is also a simulacrum of Bennett's adolescent emotional life. "There can be few of us, after all, who don't feel that we were to some extent behind the door when sex was handed out," Bennett writes in his new prose collection, "Untold Stories." Bennett negotiates the choppy waters of sexual solitude with masterly elegance. As Hector lectures Posner about compound adjectives in the poetry of Thomas Hardy—the trope of adding "un" to a noun or a verb—the explanation goes beyond the poetic to a poignant immanence of the personal. "Unkissed. Un-rejoicing. Un-confessed. Unembraced," Hector offers. Hector's fond-



School days: Samuel Barnett, Frances de la Tour, and Richard Griffiths in Alan Bennett's indictment of British education.

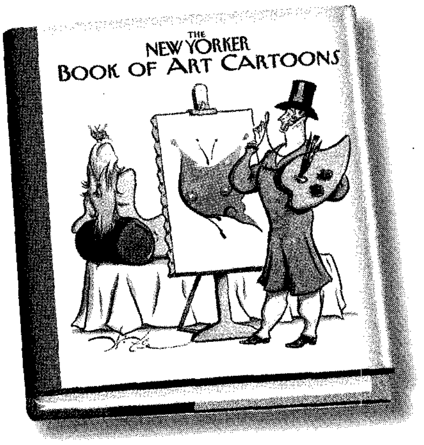
ROBERT RISKO

ling of his students, who take turns riding pillion on his motorcycle, is depicted in the same spirit of comic tolerance with which Bennett famously parried an inquiry into his own sexuality: "To enquire if I was homosexual was like asking someone who had just crawled across the Sahara Desert whether they preferred Malvern or Perrier water," he said.

Into the mix, Bennett adds the blustering vainglorious Headmaster (the expert Clive Merrison) and the no-nonsense Mrs. Lintott (Frances de la Tour), Hector's history-teaching cohort. With her hangdog look and her laconic sourness, de la Tour transforms a small part into a droll star turn. Midway through the play, after most of the other characters have confided their private thoughts to the audience, she turns to us and says, "I have not hitherto been allotted an inner voice, my role a patient and not unamused sufferance of the predilections and preoccupations of men. They kick their particular stone along the street and I watch."

In addition to these well-told stories of the schoolroom, Bennett provides a larger and more subversive critique of the nature of British public discourse—or, more specifically, of the expertise in bluffing that he sees, correctly, as a legacy of an Oxbridge education. In Bennett's eyes, the Oxbridge system emphasizes presentation, rather than penetration, the "free-floating state of cleverness," as one British journalist put it. The Socratic dialogue is replaced with the technique of paradox, and eloquence trumps relevance. Irwin's strategy is about winning, not learning—and he succeeds all too well. "Paradox works well and mists up the windows," he says. We are in the realm of "truthiness" here; or, as a student called Rudge bluntly puts it, "They keep telling us you have to lie." In the elegiac last moment of the play,

High art and high jinks



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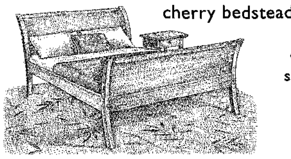

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Hector reminds the class that his inspired brand of teaching was really just the old party trick of Pass the Parcel. “Take it, feel it, and pass it on,” he says. “Pass it on, boys. That’s the game I wanted you to learn. Pass it on.” “The History Boys” does just that: it sensationally passes on Bennett’s sly civility.

If “The History Boys” dramatizes the decline of dialectic, the 1928 Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill masterpiece “The Threepenny Opera” (revived by the Roundabout Theatre Company, at Studio 54) elevates dialectic to a theatrical style: the jazzy discords of its brilliant score, the literalization of the stage experience, the mythologizing of the craven are revolutionary aesthetic strategies to deny the bourgeois audience the teat of escape and to promote thought by keeping the audience emotionally detached, so that, as Brecht wrote, “the spectator adopts an attitude of smoking-and-watching.” “The Threepenny Opera,” Brecht’s least ideological drama, was also his most commercial. Ironically, the play’s greatest influence in America has been not on theatre but on song. “Songs with tough language,” Bob Dylan, who was bowled over by the show when he first saw it, in Greenwich Village in 1961, writes in his memoir “Chronicles.” “They were erratic, unrhythmical, and herky-jerky—weird visions. . . . Every song seemed to come from some obscure tradition, seemed to have a pistol in its hip pocket, a club or a brickbat and they came at you in crutches, braces and wheelchairs. They were like folk songs in nature but unlike folk songs, too, because they were sophisticated.” Brecht’s “Pirate Jenny” led Dylan to invent his own narrative folk style. “I took the song apart and unzipped it,” he writes. “It was the form, the free verse association, the structure and disregard for the known certainty of melodic patterns to make it seriously matter, to give it its cutting edge.”

I thought of Dylan’s analysis while watching Scott Elliott’s flaccid revival of the opera. The battle that this production dramatizes is not the toll of economic forces on society but the toll of Elliott’s mediocre imagination on first-rate performers—Alan Cumming, Cyndi Lauper, Ana Gasteyer, and Jim Dale among them. Brecht wanted to dazzle and disabuse; Elliott wants to dazzle and delight. Where Brecht and Weill were innovative and muscular, Elliott displays all the backbone of a chocolate éclair.

The opera’s central figure, the murderous Macheath, is a perverse shadow of the capitalist dream of making a killing. He marries Polly Peachum, whose parents run a beggar franchise in London and who set about to have him arrested and hanged. The ugliness of the beggars and the threat of their presence at the Queen’s coronation are what actually sends Macheath to the gallows, though he is eventually spared. That’s more or less the plot. Here, however, in costumes by Isaac Mizrahi, the beggars are buff and kind of beautiful. Elliott has, to all intents and purposes, cut ugliness out of the show; he has also cut the sense of historical period, cut the sense of place. His version of the opera takes place in a contemporary no man’s land. And that is exactly where the audience ends up: nowhere. In place of Brecht’s staunchly heterosexual agenda, Elliott imposes a homosexual one. Macheath is a bisexual sex addict; his paramour Lucy Brown (Brian Charles Rooney) is a transvestite who flashes her johnson at us; the deus ex machina is a pumped-up poofter, who arrives in gold lamé shorts on a neon-blue horse. Didn’t we get enough of this transgressive giggling in “Hairspray”?

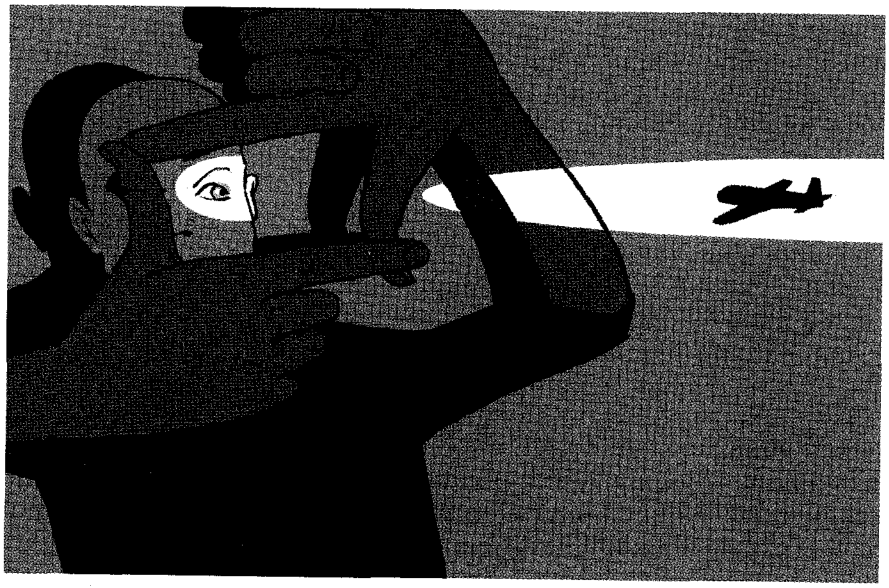
The evening isn’t so much a waste of time as a waste of talent. As Macheath’s prostitute lover, Jenny, Lauper has a husky voice that cannot be denied; there is truth and texture in her tremolo that even the overmiking can’t smudge. Dale, an old musical pro, brings a welcome Cockney clarity to Mr. Peachum, and turns his performance into a proper piece of epic acting. And although it’s masked by the folderol of the production, the finest work of the evening, it seems to me, is Wallace Shawn’s new translation. Brecht, a great poet, brought to the stage a combination of slangy simplicity and sophistication which Shawn matches with his own colloquial cunning. In “The Ballad of the Overwhelming Power of Sex,” for instance, he hits the right notes of cynical Brechtian vulgarity. Mrs. Peachum (Gasteyer), meditating on the contradiction between academics’ high minds and their rapacious libidos, sings, “In all their scholarship they ruled cheap tricks out/And yet when night fell, they all had their dicks out.” ♦

THE CURRENT CINEMA

LAST IMPRESSIONS

"United 93" and "The Death of Mr. Lazarescu."

BY DAVID DENBY


ISTVAN BANYAI

There's no visual or verbal rhetoric, no swelling awareness of the Menace We All Face.

"No one is going to help us. We've got to do it ourselves." Those plain, unarousing words, spoken by a man ordinary in looks but remarkable in perception and courage, are a turning point in "United 93," Paul Greengrass's stunning account of how a group of airline passengers, almost certain of death, decided on the morning of September 11th to fight back against hijackers on a suicide mission. But Greengrass doesn't build the moment as a turning point in any conventional way. The words of the anonymous passenger, a round-faced man who has been studying the hijackers ever since they made their first moves, are spoken firmly but without emphasis, and no dead air is placed around the statement to give it extra weight. The hijackers have taken over the flight at knifepoint and murdered a passenger in first class, and everyone else, appalled, has gathered at the back of the plane. By this time, both the passengers and the crew understand what is going on. Many of them have spoken by cell phone to friends and relatives, and they know that the World Trade Center and the Pentagon have been hit. The hijackers aren't going to land and hold them hostage; they are going to slam them into another building. The only issue—for the flight controllers and the military people we see at other points in the movie, as well as for the people on board—is what can be done to take control of a situation both terrifying and unprecedented. Greengrass's movie is tightly wrapped, minutely drawn, and, no matter how frightening, superbly precise. In comparison with past Hollywood treatments of Everyman heroism in time of war, such as Hitchcock's hammy "Lifeboat," or more recent spectacles, like "War of the Worlds," there's no visual or verbal rhetoric, no swelling awareness of the Menace We All Face. Those movies were guaranteed to raise a lump in our throats. In this retelling of actual events, most of our emotion is centered in the pit of the stomach. The accumulated dread and grief get released when some of the male passengers, shortly after those few words are spoken, rush the hijackers stationed at the front of the plane with the engorged

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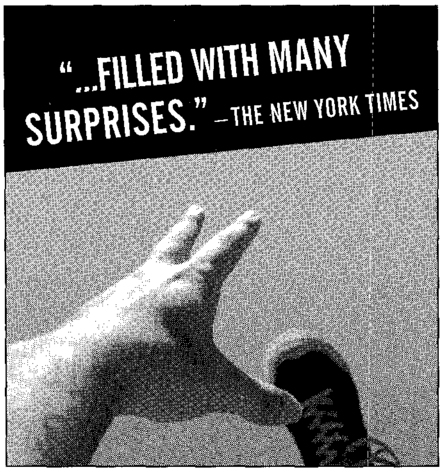
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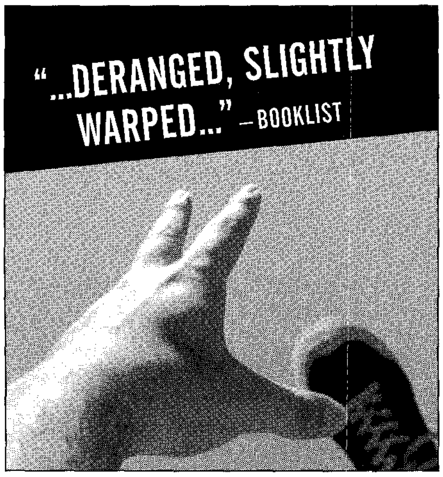
"…DERANGED, SLIGHTLY WARPED…" –BOOKLIST

fury of water breaking through a dam.

A fair amount of distaste for this movie has been building in recent weeks. Would the heroic event—which ended when the plane crashed in Pennsylvania, killing everyone aboard—be exploited in some way? And why do we need to take this death trip? But "United 93" is a tremendous experience of fear, bewilderment, and resolution, and, when you replay the movie in your head afterward, you are likely to think that Greengrass made all the right choices. Born in England in 1955, he has directed, among other films, "Bloody Sunday," a re-creation of the British Army's massacre of Northern Irish protesters, in 1972; and "The Bourne Supremacy," a franchise action movie in which a near-silent Matt Damon tears up Europe. What unites all three films is a dynamic use of the camera. It's handheld and thrust into the tumult, yet somehow—and this is the essence of Greengrass's art—we see what we need to see.

The movie begins slowly, with the morning prayers of the sweet-faced young men who will become the terrorists; the drowsy routine at Newark airport, where Flight 93, bound for San Francisco, began; the passengers amiably settling into the plane; the puzzlement at the Federal Aviation Administration command center, as first one and then another flight veers off course. When Flight 93 is hijacked, the passengers initially respond with panic, while the flight controllers on the ground, burning through their disbelief, try (without success) to rouse the military. Steadily, the editing becomes quicker, the language grows more terse and peremptory, and we begin to pick up details in a flash, out of a corner of the camera's eye.

The hijackers kill the pilots, but Greengrass doesn't show us their deaths; we just see their bodies being dragged across the cockpit, from the point of view of a flight attendant in the middle of the plane. Rejecting standard front-and-center staging, Greengrass works in half-understood fragments. When the passengers revolt, the violence is not an artfully edited fake but a chaotic, flailing scramble, and it's not performed by charismatic types displaying their prowess. In a story of collective and anonymous heroism, we don't want Denzel Washington leading the charge or Gene Hackman wrathfully telling the military to get on the stick. Greengrass uses real flight attendants, air controllers, and pilots, and mixes them in with little-known or unknown actors. As an ensemble, the players are stolid, but in a good way—they exhibit a combination of incomprehension and intelligence, befuddlement and alertness, that feels right. They live within the moment without overdefining it.

Flight 93's departure, scheduled for 8 A.M., was delayed. By the time the plane got off the ground, the attacks on the World Trade Center were only a few minutes away. In the movie, once the flight is aloft Greengrass sticks to real time, and the passing minutes have an almost demonic urgency. This is true existential filmmaking: there is only the next instant, and the one after that, and what are you going to do? Many films whip up tension with cunning and manipulation. As far as possible, this movie plays it straight. A few people made extraordinary use of those tormented minutes, and "United 93" fully honors what was original and spontaneous and brave in their refusal to go quietly.

In the heartrending Romanian film "The Death of Mr. Lazarescu," the hero—known in full as Dante Remus Lazarescu—is an unregenerate but oddly lovable mess. A retired engineer who lives in Bucharest, Lazarescu (Ion Fiscuteanu) regularly drinks something called Mastropol—home-brewed alcohol that looks like liquid wood soap. His wife is dead, and he is estranged from his daughter and his sister; he lives with three smelly cats that he loves. Lazarescu is sixty-two, a tough old guy (in Bucharest, sixty-two is elderly) with a heavy chest and thick arms. By temperament, he's independent to the point of crankiness, and sardonic in a remorseless way that suggests many campaigns and few victories. At the beginning of the film, his head is splitting, and he's sick to his stomach. Lazarescu is largely the creator of his own problems. What is he to us? That taunting question is part of the dramatic material that Cristi Puiu, the director, who wrote the movie with Razvan Radulesco, has built into "Mr. Lazarescu." What are the bonds—

if any—that hold strangers to a dying man, especially a dying alcoholic who's a pain in the neck?

Cristi Puiu, who is thirty-nine and has made just one other feature film, doesn't like to rush. As he records the mood and the flow of people at work, he holds the camera at medium distance, avoiding obvious closeups, and by the end we feel that we have understood something about Romanians, about hospitals, and about dying. This understanding is the product of a special kind of irony: we know that a movie is an artifice, lasting around two hours, in which something happens; we know that Lazarescu will die. But the characters don't know these things. They feel little of the alarm that we feel, and we want to reach into the frame and shake them by the shoulders.

A tired nurse, Mioara (Luminita Gheorghiu), arrives at Lazarescu's apartment with an ambulance. She feels lousy herself, but, as the night goes on, she is stirred by her patient's helplessness, and she becomes his advocate and protector. She's only a nurse, however, and the doctors brush her aside. It's a tough night in Bucharest (there's been a bad bus accident), and they're annoyed by this drunk with too many problems. They lord it over him and make multiple and confusing diagnoses, rather than taking responsibility for his treatment. Like some awkward, undeliverable package, Lazarescu gets shunted from hospital to hospital, from specialist to specialist, each more callous and vain than the last. An acrid kind of black comedy develops that has its roots, I suspect, both in twentieth-century Eastern European literature and in the long experience of dithering Communist bureaucracy. The doctors gossip, make jokes, and trade favors. (After seeing this movie, you may think better of the American threat of malpractice suits.) As they waste time, Lazarescu lapses into semi-poetic incoherence, like Lear's fool. The doctors' inhuman nonsense is mocked by Lazarescu's all-too-human nonsense as he tries to hold on to some fragment of memory and desire.

It would be a mistake, I think, to read this movie as simply a satire on Romanian medicine and the lethargy of the Romanian character. Lazarescu is just a lonely man who's going down, but we want at least a moment of recognition that a life is ending. As we watch Lazarescu's rudely tendered drift toward extinction, our response shifts from disgust to sympathy, from bleak amusement to something like solidarity and love. Laid out, "a poor bare, forked animal," as Lear describes himself, Lazarescu is our representative as he enters that final night. "The Death of Mr. Lazarescu," for all its terrible matter-of-factness, produces tumultuous feelings of amazement and revolt. ♦

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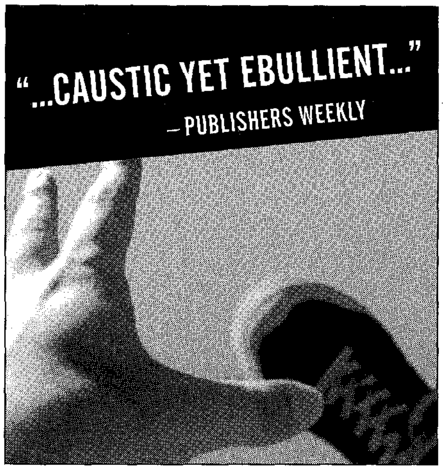

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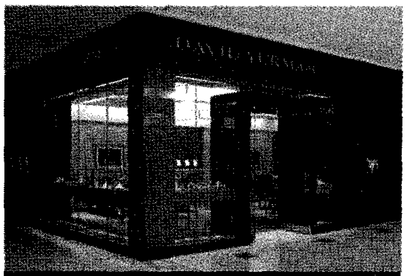
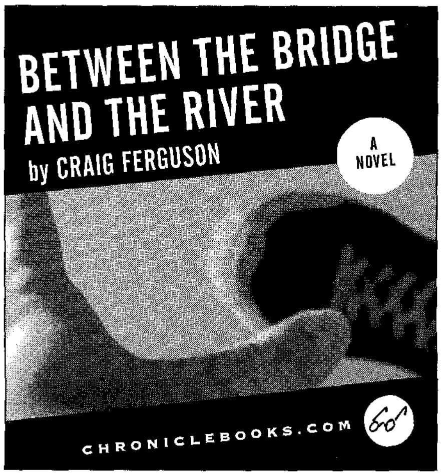


David Yurman recently opened three new boutiques: Caesars Palace, Las Vegas; NorthPark Center, Dallas; and the Mall at Millenia, Orlando. The renowned American designer's retail locations offer fine jewelry, including limited-edition and couture items, and Swiss-crafted timepieces.

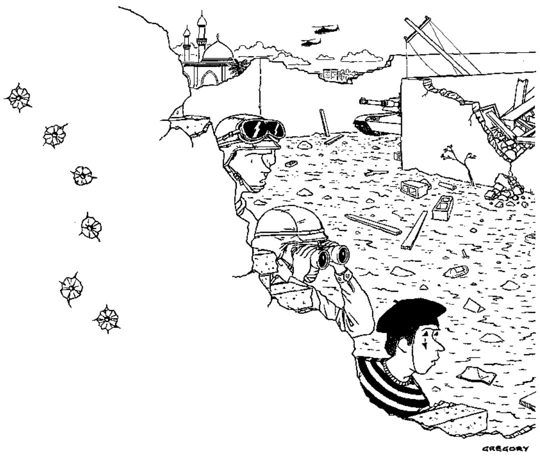
DAVID YURMAN



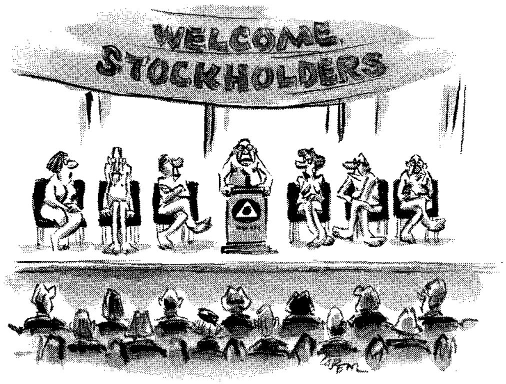
CARTOON CAPTION CONTEST

Each week, we provide a cartoon in need of a caption. You, the reader, submit a caption, we choose three finalists, and you vote for your favorite. Caption submissions for this week's cartoon, by Matthew Diffee, must be received by Sunday, April 30th. Finalists in the April 17th contest appear below; go online to vote. We will announce the winner, along with the finalists in this week's contest, in the May 15th issue. The winner will be given a signed print of the cartoon. Any U.S. resident age eighteen or over can enter or vote. To do so, and to read the complete rules, visit www.newyorker.com/captioncontest.

THE WINNING CAPTION



"It's not good—looks like they've got a full interpretive-dance troupe."
James Watts, Tulsa, Okla.



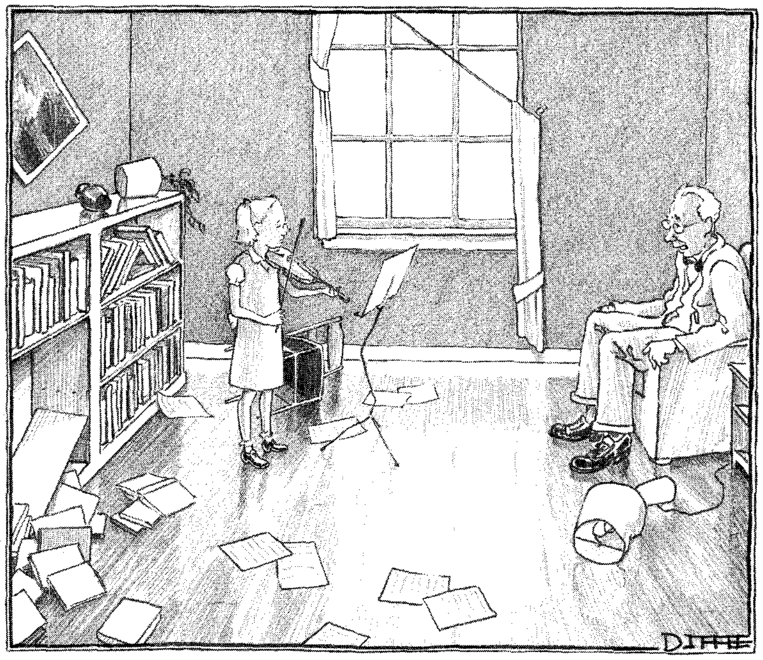
THE FINALISTS

"If all goes well, we'll get them back after the audit."
Jon Lyons, Madison, Wis.

"First, I'd like to thank the podium."
Brendan Hasenstab, Brooklyn, N.Y.

"Do I hear a motion for less disclosure?"
Ed LeFevre, Boston, Mass.

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



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